

Emperor Marcian, and the Gepids were now paid 100 lb of gold solidi annually. In 471, they occupied Pannonia Secunda (present-day Srem and Slavonia), but were attacked in 504 by an Ostrogothic army led by Count Pitzas. The Gepids attempted to regain Sirmium, but Vitigis ousted them in 528. As the Gothic war started in Italy, however, they eventually occupied Sirmium and Bassiana. They allied themselves with the Franks and began raiding into the Balkans. In response, Emperor Justinian decided to give the Lombards the annual subsidies until then paid to the Gepids. The Gepids were defeated in 547 by an allied Lombard-Byzantine-Herul force, and again, in 551 or 552, by Lombards alone. They were led by petty kings ruling over the eastern part of the Carpathian basin. In the late 480s, Thrapstila was "king" of Sirmium, followed at his death by his son, Thrasaric. Cunimund, who ruled between 560 and 567, also resided in Sirmium, together with the Arian bishop of the Gepids. In Sirmium, Cunimund minted silver imitations of Byzantine and Ostrogothic coins.¹

Following their victory over the Herules in c. 507, the Lombards moved south of the Danube's middle course into Pannonia. At some point after 526, they seem to have established themselves permanently in that region. They were most likely federates, since they appear as defending the Danube frontier, much like Suebians before them. In addition, Justinian allowed them to expand between the Sava and the Drava rivers, which brought them very close to Sirmium and to other Gepid settlements. Wacho, the king of the Lombards, had close ties to the Merovingian rulers in Reims. His eldest daughter, Wisigarda, married Theudebert in c. 530, while his younger daughter, Walderada, became the wife of Theudebert's son, Theudebald (547-55). In addition, the collapse of the Thuringian "kingdom," following Theudebert's victory of 534 or 535, brought large numbers of Thuringians within the area controlled by Lombards. Auduin, who ruled from 547/8 to 560/5, married Rodelinda, the daughter of Herminafred, the last Thuringian king.²

The first to speak of "Gepid culture" in relation to sixth-century artifacts found in the Hungarian plain (east of the Tisza river) was József Hampel, the founder of medieval archaeology in Hungary. The first cemetery was excavated in the early 1900s by Gábor Csallány at

¹ Procopius, *Wars* VII 33.8-11; *Sacred History* 18.16-19. See also Bóna 1956:235 and 1976:16 and 71; Pohl 1980:289; Christou 1991:56. For the succession of Gepid kings, see Kiss 1989-90. During their raid of 539, the Gepids of Thrasaric killed *magister militum* Calluc (Jordanes, *Getica* 387). To Jordanes, the Lombards were the allies of the emperor against the Gepids (*Getica* 386). The chronology of the Lombard-Gepid wars has been disputed. Most scholars, however, adopted 547 for the first confrontation, 549 for the second, and 551 for the third war. See Christou 1991:84, 91, and 95; Pohl 1997:90.

² Christou 1991:59 and 62; Bóna 1990b:14-15. For Frankish-Lombard relations, see also Werner 1962:136.

Chapter 5

BARBARIANS ON THE SIXTH-CENTURY DANUBE FRONTIER: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Following the collapse of the Hunnic polity in the mid-fifth century, and the military and political recovery of the Empire in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, the northern frontier along the Danube became a key element of early Byzantine foreign affairs. The fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries were also a period of dramatic changes among the Empire's northern neighbors. For the making of the Slavic *ethnie*, these changes were particularly crucial. Justinian's defensive program on the Danube frontier triggered the social and political effects that led to the process of ethnic formation described in the last chapter. Equally important was the Empire's relationship with the neighbors of the Slavs, the Gepids, the Lombards, the Cutrigurs, and the Avars. The boom which has taken place in medieval archaeology over the last few decades has made this relationship far more visible than was possible on the basis of written sources alone. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the results of archaeological investigations and the problems raised by their interpretation. Emphasis will be laid upon the use of material culture for building group identity or creating symbols of power. I will first examine the evidence from the sixth-century Carpathian basin and neighboring regions, followed by a brief survey of Avar archaeology. The last section of this chapter is devoted to the archaeology of the steppe north of the Black Sea and to problems of chronology and interpretation of hoards of silver and bronze, which are relevant for the archaeological assemblages discussed in the next chapter.

THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

Attila's death and the rapid demise of the Huns opened the way for the rise of new political forces in the Middle Danube region. The Gepids were among the first to take advantage of the power vacuum. Their king, Ardaric, who ruled between 451 and 455, became the new ally of

Berekhat, near Szentes. By 1925, Károlyi Eperjesy had unearthed the cemetery at Csanád-Bököny, the first to be coin-dated to the late fifth century. Shortly after World War II, Kurt Horedt began working at Morești, in Transylvania, the first fully excavated, sixth-century, settlement in the Carpathian basin. The "Gepid culture," however, came to be more often associated with burial assemblages. In his still unrivaled monograph of 1961, Dezső Csallány listed 275 cemeteries with more than 1,900 burials and an immense quantity of artifacts. Kurt Horedt first emphasized the association of the "Gepid culture" with contemporary assemblages in Germany and France and called it the easternmost *Reihengräber* group.³

By contrast, the evidence of sixth-century burials in Transdanubia (i.e., the region west of the Middle Danube and presumably inhabited by Lombards) is comparatively meager. Only seventeen cemeteries are known so far in western Hungary with about 400 burials dated to the period of the Lombard presence in Pannonia. Ever since Joachim Werner subdivided the archaeological material attributed to the Lombards into three chronological phases, artifact-categories from Pannonia are viewed as different from those of Italy and the region north of the Danube river. Recent studies, however, have produced a far more complex picture. Instead of a uniform, unidirectional, migration movement, archaeologists now emphasize ties maintained between regions north and south of the Middle Danube. After c. 450, a new burial pattern made its appearance in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. Warriors were buried with large numbers of weapons (swords, spears, arrow heads, shield bosses, and axes). Close contacts were maintained with Merovingian Gaul, as indicated by the glass beaker found at Zohor, and with the Scandinavian world, as exemplified by the cross-brooch found at Orasice. A significant change in fashion is also visible in female burials. Besides a pair of brooches at shoulders, women wore one or two additional fibulae attached to leather straps hanging from the belt and adorned with amber or glass beads. That occupation of the area north of the Danube continued even after the Lombards established themselves in Pannonia is shown by finds of stamped pottery in Moravia. On the other hand, strong ties were maintained with the regions further to the north. This results, for example, from the unusual association at Kajdacs of thirty-eight inhumations with ten contemporary cremation burials. Further confirmation comes from finds of handmade pottery similar to that produced in central

³ Hampel 1905:776; Bóna 1979a:10; Csallány 1961:17; Horedt 1979a. See also Horedt 1977. The term *Reihengräberkreis* was coined in 1838 by Ludwig Lindenschmidt and was used to describe funerary assemblages of the Merovingian period. The German archaeologist Joachim Werner first attempted to build a chronology for this archaeological horizon. See Werner 1935.

Bohemia. Some archaeologists laid a particular emphasis upon a variety of small, handmade pots, which were found only in children's burials. Such pots were hastily classified as Slavic, Prague-type pottery, in an attempt to provide an archaeological illustration to Procopius' story of Hildigis and his retinue of Slavene warriors (see Chapter 3). Similar pots, however, appear in contemporary children burials east of the Tisza river, in "Gepidia." This further indicates that deposition of handmade pots should be interpreted in terms of age status, not ethnicity. István Bóna rightly rejected the interpretation of handmade pots in connection with the episode of Hildigis, by pointing to substantial chronological differences.⁴

Cemeteries in "Lombardia" appear along the right bank of the Danube, between Vienna and Budapest, often near already abandoned Roman forts, but no associated settlements have been found. Contacts with the western Frankish world increased during this period, as indicated by the growing number of Frankish-Alamannic brooches, which are otherwise absent from both Bohemian-Moravian and later Italian assemblages. The same is true for finds of swords with damascened blades (such as that from Tamási), which point to production centers in the Rhine valley.⁵ Unlike the Frankish *Reihengräberkreis*, cemeteries in western Hungary produced a relatively large quantity of *millefiori* beads. Such beads were produced in Italy or in some other place in the eastern Mediterranean. By contrast, amber beads almost disappear from funerary assemblages, though connections with Scandinavia certainly continued, as evidenced by the introduction of the so-called "animal Style I" for the decoration of local types of brooches or by finds of bracteates (e.g., burial 21 at Várpálota). Scandinavian connections, perhaps mediated via "Lombardia," are also visible in funerary assemblages within the Empire's frontiers. A pair of Scandinavian brooches was found in association with a freshly minted

⁴ See Bóna 1979b:393-4 and 1979a:24; Menghin 1982:59-60; Christie 1995:37. Phasing of the archaeological evidence: Werner 1962; Tejral 1990:231. North Danubian phase: Tejral 1975. Contacts with Merovingian Gaul and Scandinavia: Pietra 1987:394-5; Zeman 1987:521. Female dress: Bóna 1976:41; Zeman 1987:521. The stamped pottery was produced only in Pannonia and only after c. 530 (Werner 1962:54). Kajdacs: Bóna 1979b:395; Menghin 1982:60. Handmade pottery: Werner 1962:60; Bóna 1979b:399-400.

⁵ Lombard occupation of abandoned Roman sites: Bóna 1976:33. Sixth-century settlements in Bohemia and Moravia: Vojtěchová and Plčnerová 1997; Čizmar 1997. Replicas of two brooches from Várpálota and Hegykő were found at Haulchin (Belgium) and Wiesbaden (Germany). See Werner 1962:62; Kühn 1974:1076-86 and 1094-106. Conversely, tongue-shaped fibulae, which are typical for funerary assemblages in Bohemia and Moravia, occasionally appear in the West (Kühn 1974:827-40). For damascened sword blades, see Bóna 1978:112. The most powerful example of Lombard-Frankish contacts is that from Mosonszentjános (northwestern Hungary). One of two burials found there produced a Frankish bell-beaker of Rhenish origin and a wooden bucket with plate escutcheon mounts with anthropomorphic heads, which are also allied to an extensive group in the Rhenish area. See Bóna 1976:72-4; Menghin 1982:66-7.

solidus of Justinian (dated after 538), in a female burial in Gračnica (Kosovo, Yugoslavia). Their closest analogy is the fibula from Skodborg (Denmark), which was found together with B- and D-bracteates, dated to the early sixth century.⁶

Archaeologists traditionally divide "Gepidia" into three areas: the Tisza plain, north Serbia, and Transylvania. Large sixth-century settlements excavated in Transylvania include sunken buildings (*Grubenhäuser*) with a superstructure supported by five, six, or, sometimes, even more posts, but without any heating facility. Such buildings were common in contemporary settlements of Central and Western Europe. The earliest, but also richest, burials, dated to the second half of the fifth century also come from Transylvania. High-status burials, with many types of often costly grave-goods, may indicate the presence of a power center, perhaps the most important in the area during the half-century following the demise of Attila's Hunnic Empire.⁷

By 500, however, the distribution of wealth changed dramatically. Rich and isolated graves were replaced by relatively large cemeteries, and costly objects of gold by other, comparatively simpler, status markers. Unlike fifth-century funerary assemblages, such markers often appear in women's graves. Among the most important were silver eagle-headed buckles, lavishly decorated with niello and cabochons and equally luxurious silver or gilded silver brooches of the Aquileia class. Both artifact-types also occur in contemporary funerary assemblages in Crimea, which

⁶ *Millefiori* beads: Tomka 1980:22; Koch 1974; Fiedler 1992:81. Amber beads: Bóna 1956:213; Werner 1962:82. Bracteates: Haseloff 1981:702; Werner 1962:80; Bóna 1976:pl. 80. Gračnica: Popović and Čerškov 1956:319–20; Vinski 1968:106 and pls. II–III; Haseloff 1981:238–41 and pl. 32/1. Werner assigned the pair of fibulae to a Kentish variant of square-headed brooches, but no such specimen is known from Anglo-Saxon England. See Werner 1970:77; Hines 1997. That contacts with Scandinavia may have been mediated via "Lombardia" is shown by the large, single, fibula from Gračnica, with its footplate inspired by brooches of the Cividale, Ravenna, and Castel Trosino classes (Kühn 1974:1187–91, 1217–24, and 1239–48). In addition, the Gračnica burial produced a buckle and two belt straps for which the closest analogies are those from the second burial at Mosonszentjános. I wish to thank Dr. Mihailo Milinković (University of Belgrade) for his kind assistance in reconstructing the exact position of the grave-goods found at Gračnica and for sharing with me his excellent knowledge of sixth-century archaeological assemblages in Yugoslavia.

⁷ Bóna 1976:29–30; Cseh 1986:205. Settlements in Transylvania: Horedt 1979a; n. a. 1955a; Vlassa et al. 1966; Gaiu 1994; Bărzău 1994–5; Zaharia 1994–5. There are no fully excavated, sixth-century settlements in the Tisza region, only isolated buildings. See Cseh 1997. *Grubenhäuser* similar to those from Transylvania were found in Germany (Bärhorst, Gladbach, Weimar, and Irl), England (West Stow), and Belgium (Brebieres). See Kiss 1992:59. For late fifth-century, high-status burials, see Harhoiu 1982:587. The Hunnic gold, or at least a good part of it, most likely fell into the hands of the anti-Hunnic coalition of 454. Knowing that the Gepid king Ardaric was the leader of this coalition, it is tempting to associate the "princely graves" at Aphidra I and II (with objects weighing more than 1 kg and 2.4 kg gold, respectively) with the late fifth-century Gepid royal seat. See Kiss 1987b:58 and 61.

points to long-distance contacts with "Gepidia." A small number of sixth-century Byzantine coins suggests that, in material culture terms, relations with the Empire had comparatively less importance.⁸

By contrast, contacts with Scandinavia were much stronger. Nils Åberg suggested that a true commercial network existed between sixth-century Gotland and Italy, in which "Gepidia," particularly after the conquest of Sirmium, played a major role. Two eagle-headed buckles were found at Tylkovo, a sixth-century cemetery in Mazuria, while Joachim Werner rightly pointed to "imports" from "Gepidia" found in the warrior burial at Taurapilis (Lithuania). An equal-armed brooch found in grave no. 84 at Szentes-Nagyhegy, in Hungary, is a typical specimen of the animal Style I (phase B) in east Sweden, which dates from the early sixth century. To the same direction points the buckle accidentally found at Gyula, near the present-day Hungarian–Romanian border, which was certainly produced in Scandinavia in a style strikingly similar to local fibulae decorated in animal Style I. Finally, the square-headed brooch with foot-plate bar, which was found in burial no. 124 at Szolnok-Szandaszőlös, is a unique continental specimen of a purely Scandinavian series of the early 500s. Such contacts were probably the result of a variety of factors, ranging from gift-exchange and exogamy to traveling craftsmen. It is much more difficult to identify trade connections. In any case, once they reached "Gepidia," few Scandinavian and Baltic goods were further redistributed into neighboring regions.⁹

This is most evident from the examination of sixth-century amber finds within the Carpathian basin. Unlike contemporary funerary assemblages in western Pannonia, burials in eastern Hungary and

⁸ According to István Bóna (1976:72), the main cause for the radical changes taking place around AD 500 was that "the majority of Gepids had lost their clan rights as many were hit by poverty, wealth and power being concentrated in the hands of a small group of nobles relying on their small armed retinues." With no serious, quantitative, study of "Gepid" funerary assemblages, although plausible, Bóna's interpretation is no more than pure speculation. It is true, however, that in Transylvania changing burial patterns were accompanied by the rise of hillforts, a phenomenon probably linked to dramatic social changes. See Horedt 1957, 1964, and 1969; Harhoiu 1982:590. No such forts were found in the Tisza region, which produced, however, the richest and largest sixth-century cemeteries. Eagle-headed buckles: Rusu 1959; Bóna 1976:13–15. Brooches of the Aquileia class: Kühn 1965:95–101; Harhoiu 1982:589 and 1990:187. Contacts with Crimea: Ambroz 1968:14 and 17; Altabin 1990:32–3. Sixth-century Byzantine coins in "Gepidia": Bóna et al. 1993:77.

⁹ Trade network: Åberg 1953:90 and 100–1; Hines 1984:277. Tylkovo: Rusu 1959:12. Taurapilis: Werner 1977. Szentes-Nagyhegy: Callány 1961:59–62 and pls. xxxix/5 and xli/1; Åberg 1953:102; Haseloff 1981:187–8. The animal Style I decoration of this fibula is very similar to that of "Lombard" fibulae in western Hungary (e.g., burial no. 8 from Bezenyó). Gyula: Callány 1961:113 and pl. cxvii/2; Haseloff 1981:702. Szolnok-Szandaszőlös: Callány 1961:211 and pl. ccxvii/1; Haseloff 1981:701; Hines 1984:271–2 and 1997:28 and pl. 102a.

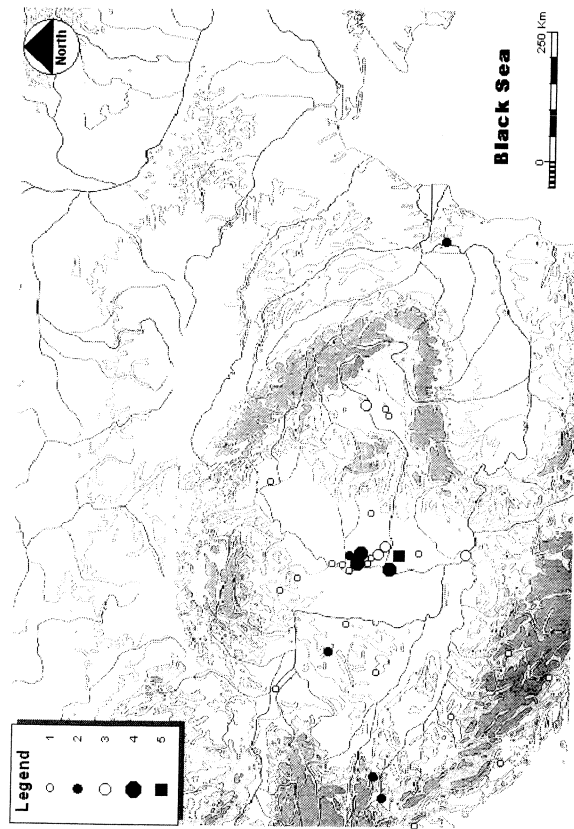


Figure 14 Distribution of amber beads in late fifth- or sixth-century burial assemblages within the Carpathian basin and neighboring areas
1 – 1 specimen; 2 – between 2 and 10 specimens; 3 – between 10 and 20 specimens; 4 – between 30 and 40 specimens; 5 – over 100 specimens

Transylvania produced a large number of amber beads, often in more than one specimen and in combination with glass or chalk beads. The largest quantity in a single cemetery (138 in total) is from Kiszombor, but neighboring cemeteries (Szentcs-Nagyhegy, Berekhát, Szentcs-Kökényzug, Szörög) also produced large numbers of amber beads. A distribution map of all known finds (Figure 14) shows a concentration in “Gepidia,” especially in the region on the left bank of the Tisza, between the Körös/Criş and the Maros/Mureş rivers. Despite the lack of any characterization studies, it is possible that these beads were made of succin amber, which is found on the shores of the Baltic Sea. That amber traveled along the Vistula trade route is demonstrated by amber deposits, such as that found at Basonia, but none could be dated later than c. 450. The distribution map shows that if amber beads were imported into “Gepidia” from the Baltic coast, comparatively few were allowed to pass further, which may indicate that they were used, between c. 500 and c. 565, as markers of group identity in “Gepidia.” This is also suggested by the distribution of amber beads dated to the

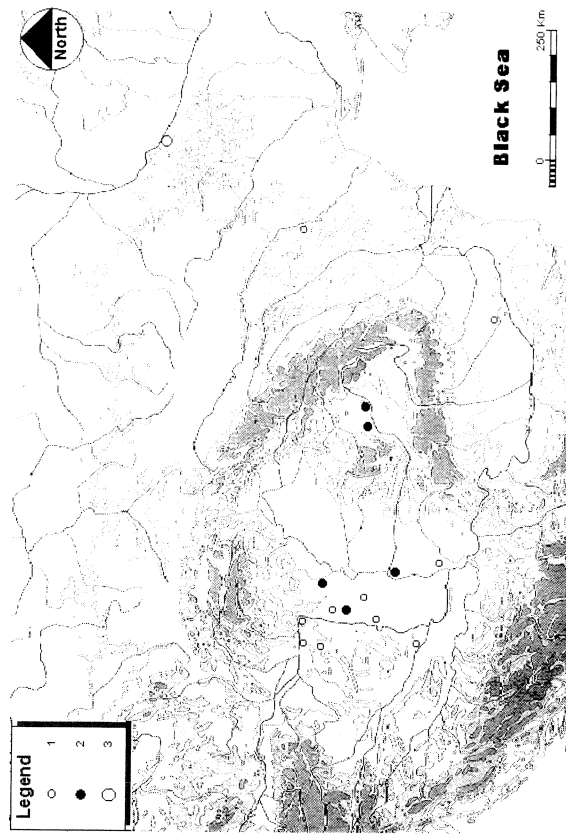


Figure 15 Distribution of amber beads in seventh-century assemblages within the Carpathian basin and neighboring areas
For symbols, see Figure 14

Early Avar period (c. 570 to c. 670), which sharply contrasts with the previous, more localized distribution (Figure 15).¹⁰

As shown in Chapter 1, emblematic style often marks and maintains boundaries and transmits a clear message to a defined target population. It becomes highly visible particularly in times of sociopolitical stress and between-group competition and hostility. Archaeological finds in Hungary and the neighboring regions, which could be dated to the late fifth century or to the first two-thirds of the sixth century, concentrate either on the right bank of the Danube or on the left bank of the Tisza river (Figure 16).¹¹ There are few known finds in the land between the two rivers and no sites of a fortified nature. This area was interpreted as

¹⁰ Amber beads in Pannonia: Csallány 1961:272. Provenance analysis: Pétrequin et al. 1987:280–2. For contacts between Merovingian Gaul and the Baltic coast, see also Kazanski 1991b. Almost 50 percent of the beads found in cemeteries in the northern Caucasus region and in Crimea were made of amber from the Kurzem coast. See Krumphanzlová 1992:361; Deopik 1961:204 table 1.

¹¹ Deposits of amber: Wielowiejski 1987:77–9 and 83. Early Avar amber beads: Tóth and Horváth 1992:205–6. Amber beads found in Early Avar assemblages were interpreted as markers of the identity of Gepid communities under Avar rule. See Kiss 1996:197.

¹² Data after Menghin 1982 and Bóna et al. 1993.

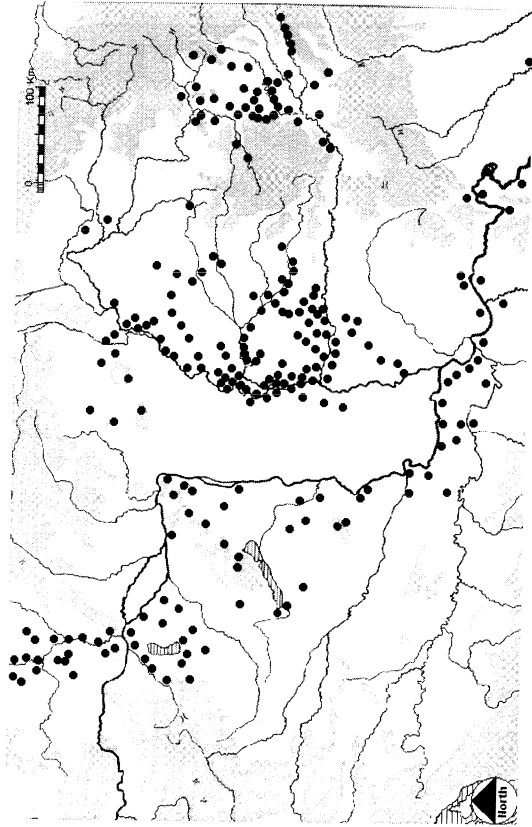


Figure 16 Distribution of late fifth- and sixth-century finds within the Carpathian basin

a “no man’s land” separating the Lombards from the Gepids. There was undoubtedly significant interaction across this buffer zone. The construction of male identity in both “Lombardia” and “Gepidia” operated with the same artifact-categories, which is most visible from the dress of the deceased at burial or from the provision of military gear. With few exceptions (such as the damascened blades from Tamási), there is no difference between swords found in warrior graves in western Pannonia and “Gepidia,” despite Jordanes’ claim that the *ensis* was a typically Gepid weapon. In both cases, these were double-edged weapons, ranging from 80 to 100 centimeters in length. In both areas, as elsewhere in Europe, shield deposition signaled male adulthood. Both west of the Danube and east of the Tisza river the prevalent type of shield boss was indeed not different from contemporary Anglo-Saxon or west Merovingian specimens with convex cone, straight wall, and five flange rivets.¹² Helmets of the Baldenheim class, which were also used by Roman

¹² For the “no man’s land” between Lombards and Gepids, see Werner 1962:116; Christie 1995:55. Wacho, the Lombard king, married Austrigusa, the daughter of the Gepid king (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* 1.21). The episode of Hildigis also points to interaction between Lombards and Gepids. For the *ensis* as a Gepid weapon *par excellencia*, see Jordanes, *Gética* 50; Csallány 1961:96 fig. 1; Cseh 1990a:30; Kiss 1992:52. For the distribution of graves with swords in pre-Avar “Gepidia,” see Kiss 1992:96 fig. 1. Shields and shield deposition: Hübener 1989:94; Dickinson and Härke 1992:13–17 and 69. It is true, however, that well-datable burial contexts in western Pannonia show that by the mid-sixth century there was a change in shape of shield bosses from

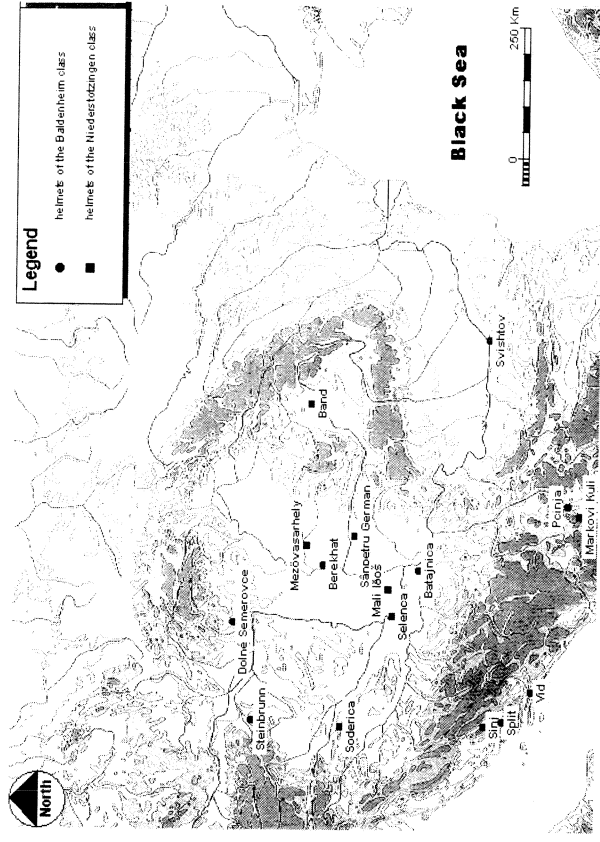


Figure 17 Distribution of helmets within the Carpathian basin and neighboring areas

army officers, were found in both “Lombardia” (Dolné Semerovce and Steinbrunn) and “Gepidia” (Batajnica and Berekhat) (Figure 17). Such rare and expensive artifacts, which clearly signalize high social status, are easy to distinguish from slightly later helmets of the Niederstotzingen class, for which parallels could be found as far as Bokchondong in South Korea.¹³

Interaction between “Lombardia” and “Gepidia” is even more visible, when we examine finds of stamped pottery. There are about forty

sugar-leaf to convex-coned, presumably under the influence of Gepid and Byzantine weapons (Werner 1962:80). Both forms of shield bosses were still in use during the Early Avar period; see Kiss 1992:52.

¹³ Baldenheim helmets: Vinski 1957:pls. 1–vii/7 and 1982:pls. 1/1, vii/2–3, x/2, and ix/1; Csallány 1961:pls. ii/8, lxxv/3, and lxx/5; Kiss 1983; Maneva 1987; Picta 1987:394; Mikulčić and Nikuljka 1979:69 fig. 4; Georgiev 1985–6:210 fig. 6/3; Press et al. 1973:137 figs. 1–2; Bóna 1976:50 fig. 11. See also Böhner 1993:206. The Ostrogothic kings Totila and Theodahad were represented on their own, respective, coinage as wearing Baldenheim-type helmets. Similar helmets appear in very rich burials in Western Europe. For the rich decoration of the Bitoła helmet, which imitates coin-studded jewelry, see Marmescu 1996:294. Niederstotzingen helmets: Kovács 1913:281 fig. 13; Maneva 1987:102; Cseh 1990a:30; Dörner 1960:fig. 3/1; Vinski 1982:pl. XV. Such helmets originated in the Far East. See Werner 1988. Their appearance in eastern and central Europe, as well as in Italy, is attributed to the Avars. See Vinski 1982:14; Maneva 1987:102; Swietosławski 1993:284; Kryganov 1990:76.

stamped vessels found in "Gepidia" and some thirty pots from "Lombardia." Pots with stamped decoration were certainly produced locally, as evidenced by the kiln and the associated potsherds found at Törökszentmiklós, in eastern Hungary. Such pottery was only rarely found in settlements, which may indicate its exclusively funerary use. All known finds of stamped pottery come from male burials. No die-study exists of stamped vessels from cemeteries in western Pannonia and "Gepidia", to be compared with C. J. Arnold's analysis of stamped urns from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. The methodology used by Ártilla Kiss for identifying sixth-century stamps that were also used during the Early Avar period is based on the macroscopic comparison of the stamps presented in the form of a presence/absence diagram. According to Kiss, there are five stamps which appear on both "Gepid" and "Lombard" vessels and four stamps which appear on "Gepid," but not on "Lombard," pottery. In reality, though most likely cut in different dies and with different frequency, almost all stamps were used in both areas. In the absence of die-studies, however, it is difficult to decide whether or not and to what extent dies moved from one site to the other, following family or kin connections. In any case, judging from the evidence available from published photographs and/or drawings, it seems there was no specific clustering. Stamp patterns, if not dies, were used on both sides of the "no man's land" between the Danube and the Tisza.¹⁴

Clear material culture distinctions were maintained, however, in a wide range of artifact-categories found in women's graves. As in many other cases in sixth-century Europe, female apparel may have been used as internal and external badge as well as a reminder of ethnic identity. While cemeteries in western Pannonia produced no specimens of any kind, various types of earrings, especially those with polyhedral cube, were particularly frequent in "Gepidia."¹⁵ Unlike graves in "Lombardia,"

¹⁴ The presence of an antler die within the early Byzantine fort at Momčilov Grad (Brmbolić 1986:fig. 37) indicates that decorated pottery was also produced within the Empire's frontiers. For the production of stamped pottery in "Gepidia," see Cseh 1990b. The kiln at Törökszentmiklós produced decorated pots which are die-linked to stamped vessels of unknown provenance, now in the National Museum in Budapest (Cseh 1990b:236). Settlement finds of stamped pottery: Horedt 1979b:pl. 37/1; Popović 1987:22 fig. 17/7, 9-12; Bárzu 1994-5:288 fig. 14/8, 12, and 19. Burial finds: Simoni 1977-8:231; Knific 1994; Kiss 1984:135; Bóna 1990b. See also Kiss 1992:55 and 77-9. Die-link studies: Arnold 1983 and 1988. The lattice circle, which is viewed as a typically Lombard stamp, occurs frequently on handmade, sixth-century pottery in southeast and southwest Germany (Werner 1962:60). Two stamps, the lattice lozenge and the simple lattice rectangle, are particularly frequent on pottery found in Italy. Stamped pottery also appears in early Avar ceramic assemblages, but there are no die-linked specimens. See Vida 1990-1:133, 1995:104, and 1999:37 with n. 16.

¹⁵ Female apparel as marker of ethnic identity: Sasse 1990:48; Strauß 1992:70; Dickinson 1993:39; Hines 1994:52. See also Pancake 1991:46. For the absence of earrings in Transdanubia, see Sági 1964:396. Earrings with polyhedral cube: Horedt 1979b; Slabe 1986:201; Bierbrauer 1987:150; Cseh 1990a:29-30; Uenzel 1992:163. For other types of earrings, see Kiss 1992:52-3 and 1996:309.

where single-layered combs were preferred, women and children in "Gepidia" were buried with double-layered ones in their hair.¹⁶ Unlike Lombard women's graves, Gepid ones had no straps with fastened jewels, though they occasionally produced reliquaries attached to the belt. In "Lombardia," after c. 530, there were no burials, either of children or of women, with artificially deformed skulls. By contrast, artificial cranial deformation, a practice introduced by the Huns in the early 400s, was maintained in "Gepidia" during most of the sixth century.¹⁷

No other artifact-category, however, is more relevant in relation to the construction of ethnic boundaries than brooches. The distribution of all types of bow fibulae which were in use during the first two-thirds of the sixth century (Figure 18) shows a sharp contrast between the area west of the Danube and the region east of the Tisza river.¹⁸ A particularly popular class of brooches in "Gepidia" was the Gurzuf type, which also occurs in Crimea and Mazuria, an indication of long-distance contacts established with "Gepidia."¹⁹ However, the most popular fibulae were those of the Hahnheim class, many of which have parallels in Germany or France. There are two variants of this class, apparently of local production and use.²⁰ A related, also very popular, type of brooch was that of the Krainburg class.²¹ Brooches of this class appear in Crimea, Mazuria, Germany, and France. Specimens with a slightly different decoration

¹⁶ See Bóna 1956:213 and 1976:43. Such combs were produced locally. See Dumitraşcu 1982.

¹⁷ Reliquaries: Csallány 1961:pl. xxxix/4. Lack of skull deformation in "Lombardia": Zeman 1987:524. Skull deformation in "Gepidia": Cseh 1990a:60. On skull deformation and ideals of female beauty, see the interesting remarks of Mikic 1992-3:197-8. Artificial cranial deformation is also attested in contemporary cemeteries in the western Balkan area. See Pilaric 1975; Slabe 1978; Vuga 1980. For "Hunnish" artificial cranial deformation, see Werner 1956. For artificial cranial deformation in Merovingian Gaul, see Crubézy 1990. The practice is also attested in Crimea, where it is associated with both female and male burials. See Kropotkin 1959:190. For a cross-cultural perspective on artificial cranial deformation and its relation to social status, see Garrett 1988.

¹⁸ Data compiled from Csallány 1961; Kühn 1974; Werner 1962; and Bóna 1990b. In what follows, I left aside cast fibulae with bent stems and crossbow brooches, which were particularly frequent in "Gepidia." The same is true for fifth-century brooch types, such as Alkofen or Krefeld (Kühn 1974:571-5 and 587-95).

¹⁹ Kühn 1974:728-42. Assigned brooches: Csánád-Bököny, Kiszombor (grave 88), Moreşti, Novi Banovci, Pecica, Szentes-Rákoszi utca, Szentes-Kökényzug (graves 49 and 66), Bereckhat (graves 2 and 43), Szentes-Nagyhegy (grave 22), and Simnicolau Mare. Specimens produced in Crimea may have imitated "imports" from "Gepidia" (Albabin 1990:20-1).

²⁰ Kühn 1974:799-811. Assigned brooches: Hódmezővásárhely-Gorza (grave 94), Magyarács, Szentes-Kökényzug (grave 56), Bereckhat (grave 274), Tarnaméra, and Jankovo (grave 13). Despite Kühn's claims to the contrary, it is possible that this class of fibulae originated in the West, sometime before or after 500, and was later "imported" to "Gepidia." For local variants, see Horedt 1979a:183. Some authors compared one of these variants with the so-called "Slavic" brooches of Werner's class II, a comparison rejected by Werner himself. See n.a. 1954:210; Horedt 1977:258; Werner 1950:167.

²¹ Kühn 1974:758-66. Assigned brooches: Beregovo, Csongrád-Kertőshalmi, Dunaföldvár, Kistelek, Oradea, Szentes-Nagyhegy (grave 77), Szentes-Kökényzug (graves 29 and 50), Tiszaroff (grave 1), and Tiszaladány.

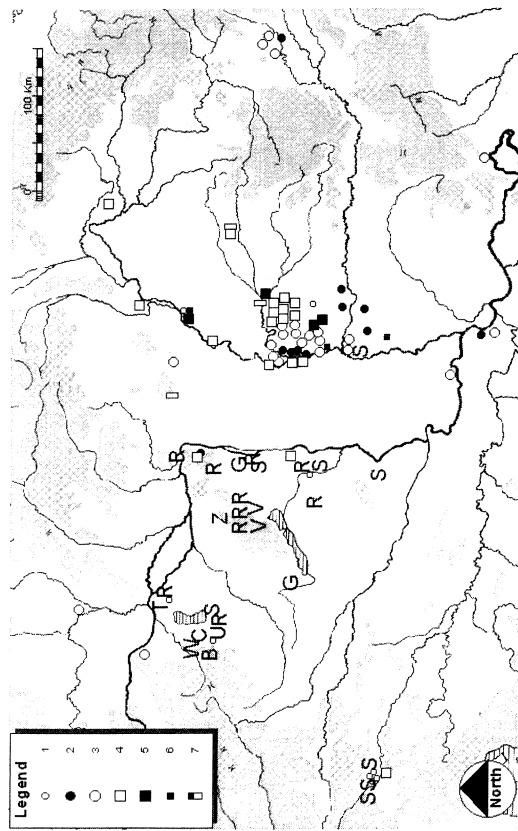


Figure 18 Distribution of sixth-century fibulae within the Carpathian basin

1 - disc-brooches; 2 - Guszuf class; 3 - Hahnheim class and variants; 4 - Krainburg class; 5 - Reggio Emilia class; 6 - Szentes-Berekhat class; 7 - Wittislingen class; 8 - Burghagel class; 9 - Cividale class; 10 - Goethe class; 11 - Ravenna class; 12 - S-shaped brooches; 13 - Castel Trosino class; 14 - Trivieres class; 15 - Ulm class; 16 - Wiesbaden class; 17 - Zangeneifibel class.

were also found in Italy, where they were interpreted as "imports" from "Gepidia."²² Conversely, fibulae of the Reggio Emilia class may have been Ostrogothic "imports" into "Gepidia."²³ Two specimens of the Suuk Su group, that of Kiszombor (grave 146) and that of Magyartés, have analogies in Spain. Two other classes, Pfullingen and Wittislingen, originated in the West.²⁴ By contrast, S-shaped fibulae and disc-brooches are very rare in the area east of the Tisza river.²⁵

The range of brooch classes in "Lombardia" is also very wide. A

²² Kühn 1974:738-66. For Italian specimens, see Bierbrauer 1975:284 and pl. xxm/2 and 1978:221-2 and pl. xciii/7-3.

²³ Kühn 1974:718-26. Assigned brooches: Szentes-Nagyhegy (grave 8), Berekhat (grave 105 and stray find), and Tiszafüred.

²⁴ Kühn 1974:510-46 (Suuk Su), 639-48 (Pfullingen), and 801-4 (Wittislingen). Only one specimen of the Pfullingen class is known, that of grave 247 at Kiszombor. Wittislingen brooches: Gyöngyös, Oradea, Szarvas, Ózón. The only known analogy for the fibulae from Berekhat (grave 202), Tiszafüred (grave 1), and Bočar (grave 4) is the specimen found at Mánz (Kühn 1974:288 no. 190). They all form Kühn's class Szentes-Berekhat (Kühn 1974:1275-8). Three other brooches (Morești, Novi Banovci, and Szentes-Kökényzug, grave 29), which belong to Kühn's class Tamas (Kühn 1974:766-79), have no analogies outside "Gepidia."

²⁵ S-shaped fibula. Szöreg (grave XI). Disc-brooches: Tiszafüred (grave 1) and Hödmezővásárhely (grave 77).

brooch of Kühn's Burghagel class was found at Hegykő (grave 21). Its closest analogy is a fibula from Besançon.²⁶ Frankish analogies may also be cited for two specimens of the Trivieres class, found at Várpálota (grave 5) and Jutas. This is also true for the fibula of Kühn's Ulm class found at Fertőszentmiklós, for the Zangeneifibel found at Várpálota (grave 13), and for the fibula of Kühn's Wiesbaden class found at Hegykő (grave 4). The only specimen of the Guszuf class, which was so popular in contemporary "Gepidia," was found at Szentendre. From the same cemetery (grave 33) comes the only specimen of the Hahnheim class found west of the Danube river. By contrast, the number of S-shaped and disc-brooches is comparatively larger. The distribution of fibulae west of the Danube river is also characterized by a relatively large number of brooches without any analogies outside "Lombardia," except Italy. Kühn's Goethe, Cividale, Ravenna, and Castel Trosino classes are cases in point.²⁷

The distribution of all these types speaks for itself. Completely different, but coexisting, types of brooches were in use and fashion on each side of the "no man's land" between the Danube and the Tisza river. We can clearly speak of two different "styles" of brooch-use and assume that they convey information about relative identity of the brooch owners. The patterns and contrasts created did not produce, however, ethnically specific artifact-categories. Very few, if any, brooch classes were creations *ex nihilo* and many were either "imports" or produced as replicas of "imported" specimens. In other words, no particular class could be *a priori* diagnosed as either "Gepid" or "Lombard." The ethnic boundary emerged from the manipulation of specific types, without assigning an "ethnic value" to any of them. More important, this coincides in time with increasing rivalry between the two groups, following the Lombard settlement of the land between the Sava and the Drava rivers, not far from Sirmium, now in Gepid hands. The Lombard-Gepid wars of the mid-sixth century may have contributed to the consolidation of emblematic styles on the Lombard-Gepid frontier. According to Theophylact Simocatta, the final confrontation between Alboin and Cunimund was

²⁶ Brooches in "Lombardia": Tejral 1990. Burghagel class: Kühn 1974:965-70.

²⁷ Kühn 1974:689-94 (Ulm class), 827-40 (Zangeneifibel), 996-1006 (Goethe class), 1076-86 (Wiesbaden class), and 1094-106 (Trivieres class), 1187-91 (Cividale class), 1217-24 (Ravenna class), and 1239-48 (Castel Trosino class). Two specimens of the Hahnheim class were found in Mistřín and Vienna (see Werner 1962:68). S-shaped fibulae: Kajdacs (grave 2), Rácálmás (graves 16 and 20), Fertőszentmiklós (grave 9), Mohács (grave 5), Kranj (several specimens). Disc-brooches: Hegykő (graves 18 and 21), Bezenye (grave 8), Kajdacs (grave 2), Kranj (graves 193/1907, 43, 58, and 66). Goethe fibulae: Keszthely (grave B) and Rácálmás (grave 2). Cividale class: Hegykő (grave 18). Ravenna brooches: Bezenye (grave 20), Várpálota (graves 1, 17, and 19), Kápolnásnyék, Szentendre (graves 29 and 56), Kajdacs (grave 2), Tamási (grave 6), Rácálmás (grave 16), and Fertőszentmiklós (grave 9). Castel Trosino class: Bezenye (grave 8).

caused by Rosimunda, the daughter of the Gepid king, who was kidnapped by Alboin. This may suggest that aristocratic women played a major role in the display of emblematic styles.²⁸

THE AVARS

Few events in the medieval history of East Central Europe were given more importance by historians than the annihilation of the Gepid and, later, Lombard "kingdoms" and the conquest of the Carpathian basin by the Avars. To many, the year 568 is the beginning of the Middle Ages, an East European equivalent of 476. Archaeologists working within a culture-historical framework maintain that AD 568 represents an important chronological marker and cultural watershed.²⁹

József Hampel was the first to acknowledge the existence of two chronological horizons in the archaeological material attributed to the Avars. András Alföldi first pointed to the importance of Byzantine coins found in burials for the phasing of the "Avar culture." Despite recent caveats, some fifty Byzantine coins found as either funerary offerings or ornamental objects in rich male burials still underpin the entire chronological system of Avar archaeology.³⁰ There are more than 50,000 burials dated to the period between c. 570 (the foundation of the Avar qaganate) and c. 800 (the collapse of the Avar qaganate following Charlemagne's victories). On the basis of her analysis of the Alattyán cemetery, Ilona Kovrig first divided this period into three phases, namely Early (568–650/60), Middle (650/60–700), and Late Avar (700–92). Only the first phase can be coin-dated, but Kovrig believed that some Early Avar assemblages, especially those associated with coins minted for Justinian, Justin II, or Tiberius II, were earlier than the first half of the seventh century. This claim, however, proved to be groundless, given the underlying problems of the chronological association of coins and artifacts and of their respective use-life.³¹

²⁸ Theophylact Simocatta VI 10.8.

²⁹ Pohl 1988:52–7. In István Bóna's words (1976:105), the year 568 was the end of "almost 600 years' rule by successive Germanic tribes in the Carpathian basin."

³⁰ See Hampel 1905; Alföldi 1934. For the use of Byzantine coins for the chronology of Avar assemblages, see Bóna 1990a:113. Separating the Early Avar material from the Middle Avar one, however, is a very difficult, if not impossible, task. Coins are not always good guides to chronological studies. For example, a bracelet with trumpet-shaped ends was found at Szentendre in association with a coin minted for Emperor Phocas (607–10). Its closest parallel is that from the Zemianský Vrbovok hoard, which also produced milaresia struck for Emperor Constantine IV (668–9). See Bálint 1993:201. For the Szentendre burial, see also Garam 1992:138–9.

³¹ Kovrig 1963. See also Bóna 1971:291; Sós 1973:86. The existence of an Early Avar phase had already been postulated by Dezső Csallány, who was also the first to assign artifact-categories to

The number of Byzantine coins produced so far by Early Avar assemblages, on the other hand, is remarkably small. As a consequence of various treaties with the Empire, Byzantine payments to the Avars between 568 and 626 totalled at least 6 million solidi. It is very likely that a good part of this incredible wealth was later redistributed within the Avar qaganate as gifts. It is possible that the majority of these coins were melted to provide raw material for gold jewelry, for the exact weight of the largest earrings with pyramid-shaped pendants, which are so typical for Early Avar assemblages, is equivalent to either eight or ten light solidi. Since the use of gold, instead of the usual silver, is restricted to a few exceptionally rich burials, it is possible that supplies of Byzantine gold became the monopoly of a small elite headed by the qagan. If this is true, it may be more productive to treat Early Avar assemblages as indicative of social stratification, than to continue to draw lists of chronologically sensitive artifact-categories.³²

Some authors ascribe archaeological assemblages to the Early Avar period on the basis of their alleged analogies from Central Asia or the Middle East, but rarely can contemporary parallels for Early Avar artifact-categories be found outside the Carpathian basin.³³ Equally unique are burials with both human and horse skeletons. Swords with P- or 3-shaped sheath attachments are typical for the earliest assemblages attributed to Avar warriors, but all of them predate their frequently cited East

this archaeological phase. See Csallány 1946–8. Middle Avar assemblages produced Avar imitations of non-identifiable Byzantine coins. See Bóna 1980:34. For Early Avar assemblages with coins of Justinian, Justin II, and Tiberius II, see Garam 1990:138–9. For a critique of Kovrig's chronology based on coins, see Bálint 1989:149 and 1993:246. The Kunágota burial, which produced a light-weight solidus of Justinian, is now dated to the first third of the seventh century. See Garam 1995:127.

³² Pohl 1991b:598. For a list of treaties and payments of gold to the Avars, see Pohl 1988:502. Unlike Goths, Lombards, or Gepids, the Avars never received payments in food. Like coins, finds of Byzantine jewels are equally rare in Avar assemblages. For the weight equivalence between Avar earrings and solidi, see Bóna 1990a:117. For gold as a monopoly of the Avar elite, see Garam 1990:258. For Avar assemblages as indicative of social stratification, see Szénpetéri 1993a and 1993b.

³³ Bálint 1989:149 and 1993:214; Garam 1990:253. A clear Central Asian origin may be claimed only for bone artifacts, such as needle cases, buckles, awls, or belt pendants. See Sckeres 1957; Bóna 1980:52 and 54. Of "Asian" origin may also be finds of single earrings with male skeletons, the deposition of the belt (without buckle), sword, and quiver on the right side of the skeleton, with the bow on top of the coffin. See Bálint 1993:17–18 and 237; Tomka 1995:83. The only parallels for the deposition of armor slats are those from the Altai region and the Tuva basin (Bóna 1980:45). By contrast, there is no "Asian" element in the decoration of belt-buckles and plates. Silver rosette-mounts, which appear frequently in Early Avar assemblages, have no analogies outside the Carpathian basin, except two rich burials in Ukraine (Malo Pereshchepino and Glodost). See Bálint 1993:234; Sós and Salamon 1995:33. In addition, the use of earrings by adult males most likely imitated Sassanian practices (Bóna 1980:39). Attempts to identify Central Asian Avars by means of physical anthropology bore no fruits. See Tóth 1967.

European or Central Asian analogies.³⁴ It is also difficult to demonstrate a Central Asian origin for the wheel-made grey ware, which was produced only during the Early Avar period in southwest Hungary.³⁵

Both bow-shaped stirrups and stirrups with elongated attachment loops, which are viewed as typical for Early Avar assemblages and the earliest European stirrups, were found in the Kudyrga cemetery in Tuva (west of Lake Baikal, near the Chinese–Russian–Mongolian frontier). Turkic archaeology, however, is notoriously lacking any firmly established chronological system. As a consequence, there is no possibility of deciding whether or not such stirrups were brought by the Avar horsemen from Central Asia or “invented” by them in the Carpathian basin. The majority of Early Avar burials were found either in isolation or in small groups of graves. In the absence of large cemeteries, which would permit an analysis of frequency, distribution, and toposeriation of artifact-categories, the relative chronology of the Early Avar period remains problematic.³⁶

Another major difficulty is the dating of Middle Avar assemblages. On the exclusive basis of burial evidence and without sufficient settlement finds for comparison, it is almost impossible to discriminate between (late) Early and Middle Avar artifact-categories, although it is clear that the second half of the seventh century witnessed some dramatic cultural change. The Middle Avar phase was first identified within the Kisköre-Halastó cemetery, but its best-known monuments are the rich burials of the so-called Tótipusztá–Dunapentele–Igar group. Dated by means of coins minted for Emperors Constans II and Constantine IV, these burials have close analogies in extremely rich funerary assemblages from

³⁴ For burials with human and horse skeletons, see Bóna 1979c:18–19. For swords with P- or 3-shaped sheath attachments, see Bálint 1993:219; Ambroz 1986. The date of the Avar specimens is given by the warrior burial found at Szegvár–Sápoldal, in which a double-edged sword with P-shaped sheath attachments was associated with an imitation of a solidus struck for Emperor Maurice. Another, similar specimen was found in burial 2 at Kiskörmör, in association with a solidus struck for Emperor Phocas. The latest P-shaped sheath attachments known so far are those from the horseman burial at Iváncsa, dated to the late seventh century, but such artifacts were already rare by AD 630 (Garam 1992:157). Swords with 3-shaped sheath attachments, such as found in Early Avar assemblages, have no parallel outside the Carpathian basin, except the rich burial at Malo Pereshchepino.

³⁵ Vida 1990–91:133 and 1999:42–63. István Bóna claimed a Central Asian origin for this ceramic category, but other authors pointed to possible parallels in sixth-century ceramic assemblages in Romania, of the so-called Ipotești–Cândești culture. See Vékony 1973. For ceramic categories with clear Central Asian analogies, see Vida 1992.

³⁶ Truly Avar stirrups first occurred in Merovingian burials in southern and western Germany during the second third of the seventh century. Replicas of Avar stirrups with elongated attachment loops were produced there as early as the second half of the seventh century. See Bott 1976:227. For Turkic archaeology, see Bálint 1989:242–3 and 249. Large Avar cemeteries only appear after c. 650 (Bóna 1971:292). For large cemeteries with Early Avar material, see Salamon and Erdélyi 1971; Sós and Salamon 1995; Kiss 1996; Bárdos 1995. Toposeriation: Djindjian 1985.

Ukraine, which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter (Voznesenka, Malo Pereshchepino, Glodosy, and Zacheplivovki).³⁷

These astonishing parallels at such a great distance were interpreted as evidence for the migration into the Avar qaganate, by the late seventh century, of a Bulgar group fleeing the civil war inside the western Turkic qaganate. But there are also signs of remarkable continuity between the Early and the Middle Avar assemblages, particularly in western Hungary. Beginning with the last decades of the Early Avar period, belt buckles and plates were decorated with an original variant of the animal Style II, characterized by the frequent occurrence of the dentil pattern. Single-edged sabres, of a type commonly dated to the Middle Avar period, were found in at least three Early Avar contexts, that of the Sânpetru German burial (dated by means of a perforated coin struck for Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine), that of burial 259 from Kölked–Feketekapu, and that of grave x from Tarnaméra–Urak dűllő. Combat axes, though typical for the Middle, but especially for the Late, Avar period, are also known from Early Avar contexts and from seventh-century assemblages in Italy and Albania.³⁸

The understanding of Avar history and archaeology is crucial for the problem of Slavic ethnicity, particularly because, as shown in Chapter 3, in the aftermath of the Avar conquest, numerous groups of Slavones became subjects of the qagan. The subject of Avar–Slavic relations is extremely controversial. The debate has often been embittered by nationalistic claims, but there is also little understanding of how the Early Avar society and qaganate operated. As far as written sources allow us to tell, the territorial division following the conquest of the Carpathian basin resembles a Turkic scheme (of Chinese inspiration) based on *äl* (“the peace zone”), including all territories under the qagan’s direct rule, and *yägi*, the territory of the enemy, who refuses to obey the qagan’s orders.

³⁷ The first to postulate the existence of the chronological phase now known as Middle Avar was the Hungarian archaeologist Gyula László (1955). For the culture change of the mid-seventh century, see Bálint 1993:201. The most important marker of this change is the shift from swords to sabres and combat axes, an indication of changing warfare practices. In addition, the Middle Avar period coincides with the introduction of a new decoration style primarily based on the interlaced pattern. See Bálint 1989:156–60; Garam 1992:158–9. For Middle Avar sabres and their Sassanian parallels, see also Bálint 1978:184. For the Tótipusztá–Dunapentele–Igar group, see Garam 1976:129 and 140; Fülöp 1988 and 1990; Müller 1989. Avar settlements: Bóna 1968. The first (late) Avar sunken building was excavated in 1962 by Otto Trogmayer at Bokros (Bóna 1971:313). The monograph of the site at Dunajváros remains the only comprehensive study of (Early and Middle) Avar settlements. See Bóna 1973.

³⁸ Sânpetru German: Dörner 1960; Kölked–Feketekapu: Kiss 1996:230 and 232; Tarnaméra–Urak dűllő: Szabo 1965:42 and 69 pl. viii/1–3. See also Bálint 1992:339. For the theory of the Bulgar migration, see Bálint 1989:169. For the transition from double-edged swords to sabres, see Simon 1991 and 1991–2. Combat axes: Kiss 1996:238 and 318. Avar variant of animal Style II: Nagy 1988 and 1995.

The Avars viewed the Danube river as the frontier between *yāgī* and *ēl*. Qagan Bayan considered the Slavens in Walachia to be part of the *ēl*. Ethnic cleavage within the *ēl* may not be easily identifiable, particularly because the Avars themselves were subdivided into clans and tribes. The archaeological evidence substantiates this complex picture. Recent studies show that within the Carpathian basin, various artifact-categories, particularly dress accessories, have a restricted, localized, distribution, and, in fact, there are few items which could be considered "Avar" on the basis of their wide distribution.³⁹

THE STEPPE NORTH OF THE BLACK SEA

There was no heir to the Hunnic "Empire" north of the Black Sea. Beginning with the late 500s, Cutrigurs, Utigurs, Saragurs, and Onogurs appear to have shared both the control over the steppe and the interest of historical sources. The first to mention the Cutrigurs were Procopius and Agathias. Both referred to them as "Huns." A German historian of the Romantic era, however, claimed that the Cutrigurs and the Utigurs were Bulgars. To many, his claim is still indisputable truth, despite the fact that no source referring to Bulgars mentions the Cutrigurs and vice versa. The Bulgars appear in written sources as early as the mid-fourth century, but only in the region north of the Caucasus mountain range.⁴⁰

By contrast, the "Hunnic" Cutrigurs were constantly located in the area close to Crimea and to the northern shore of the Black Sea. They probably controlled the entire steppe corridor up to the Danube river. Since Menander the Guardsman is the last source to mention the Cutrigurs, they most likely did not survive politically in the aftermath of the Avar invasion. During the last years of Justinian's reign, the control of

³⁹ Bracelets with trumpet-shaped ends of the so-called Szentendre type are a case in point. The majority of specimens known so far come from Transdanubia (Sós and Salamon 1995:41). The same is true about buckles of Ibler's classes Pécs and Nagyvársány. See Ibler 1992:138 and 143. For Avar-Slavic relations, see Avenarius 1973 and 1987; Fritze 1980; Tyszkiewicz 1989. *Yāgī* and *ēl*: Göckjenian 1993. Avar clans and tribes, see *Slavtīgikoni* xi 2.34–5. Non-Avar groups within the Avar qaganate: Pohl 1988:225–36. On the basis of their archaeological distribution, scholars postulated the existence of a buffer zone between Middle Avar cemeteries in south and southeast Slovakia and presumably Slavic settlements with Prague-type pottery to the north. These cemeteries were interpreted as Avar outposts in Transdanubia against Samo and his "kingdom." See Zábajník 1988:401–2.

⁴⁰ Zeus 1837:713–14; Romashov 1992–4:218. John of Antioch refers to Bulgars in relation to events taking place in 480 in the Lower Danube region, while other sources mention the first Bulgar raid across the Danube in 499. They subsequently appear as the allies of the Gepids. Dező Simonyi argued, therefore, that these were not Cutrigurs, but a separate group of Bulgars who came to Pannonia with the Huns and remained there until the arrival of the Avars. See Simonyi 1964. This theory was very popular in the 1960s and 1970s and had a considerable influence upon interpretations of the Early Avar archaeological evidence. See Csallány 1963; Fetiich 1972; Beshevlev 1981:85–6. Following István Bóna's devastating critique, this interpretation is now abandoned. See Bóna 1981.

the steppe was disputed between Utigurs and Cutrigurs, but the rise of the Gök Türk Empire brought the Utigurs, the Onogurs, and other groups under the domination of the western qaganate. At the same time, the Cutrigurs became subjects of Bayan, the qagan of the Avars. The two "Empires" most likely collided on the Don river. As the civil war broke within the western Gök Türk qaganate after the death, in 630, of the yabghu qagan T'ung, two confederations were competing for power and control over the steppe north of the Caucasus range: the Bulgars, under the leadership of a heir of the Dulo, the leading clan of the left division of the western qaganate, and the Khazars, led by a member of the charismatic clan Ashina of the Turkish qaganate, associated with the right division. The Bulgar qaganate established shortly after 630 by Koubratos, who concluded a treaty with Emperor Heraclius, probably reached the Dnieper river to the west, which is viewed as an indication that, in the first half of the seventh century, the steppes between the Dnieper and the Danube rivers were still controlled by the Avars.⁴¹

As in many other cases, the archaeological evidence does not fit the picture drawn by historians on the basis of written sources. The steppe north of the Black Sea has not produced so far any materials from the late fifth century. Finds of the following period (sixth to seventh century) fall into one of Ambroz's groups IV, V, and VI. Group IV, which Ambroz viewed as representing the "lower class," the "commoners" of the steppe society, consists of burials with no weapons, but with perforated buckles, mounts, and strapends, all datable to the late sixth and early seventh centuries (*Veliki Tokmak*, Akkerman, Bilozerka). By contrast, group V includes only extraordinarily rich burials, such as Malo Pereshchepino, Kelegeia, and Glodosy. In group VI, Ambroz included burials such as Sivash's'ke, Kostogryzovo, Kovalevka, and Iablonia, in which a human skeleton (often a male) was commonly associated with that of a horse or with parts of a horse skeleton (skull and legs).⁴²

⁴¹ Szádeczky-Kardoss 1986a:153–62. Koubratos' Bulgaria: Pletneva 1980:27–9; Bozhilov and Dimitrov 1995. Cutrigurs north of the Black Sea: Golden 1980:261; Bálint 1989:14. Last mention of the Cutrigurs: Menander the Guardsman, fr. 12.6. As the Tang dynasty came to power with Turkic assistance, almost all sources for the history of the Gök Türk qaganate are Chinese. They have been collected by Edouard Chavannes (1969, first published in 1903). The death of the yabghu qagan T'ung coincides with the collapse of the eastern qaganate. For the ensuing civil war, see also Golden 1980:37–42 and 1982:40–1 and 50–4; Bálint 1989:239–40; Whitrow 1996:222.

⁴² Ambroz 1981; Orlov 1985; Baram and Kozlovskii 1991:235. The continuity of the steppe "Hunnic culture" of the early fifth century well into the sixth century has recently been advocated by A. V. Bogachev (1996). The evidence cited, however, is far from conclusive. Most sixth- to eighth-century funerary assemblages in the steppe north of the Black Sea were found in the area between the Danube and Dnieper rivers. There are comparatively fewer finds in Left Bank Ukraine and virtually no finds between the Don and the Volga rivers. See Dimitrov 1987:63; Bálint 1989:102. For a rare instance of perforated belt mounts in Left Bank Ukraine, see Lipking 1974:145–7. For the steppe east of the Don river, see Bezuglov 1985.

Ambroz's tripartite scheme, which was designed to provide an easy model for understanding the society of the steppe nomads, does not seem, however, to stand against the existing evidence. First, many burials of Ambroz's fourth group are female graves (Khristoforovka, Malaia Ternovka, Akkerman, Veliki Tokmak), which can easily explain the absence of weapons. Second, burials of groups VI and V do not coincide in time. Besides an extensive array of gold and silver grave-goods, extremely rich burials, such as Kelegeia, Malo Pereshchepino, and Zachevilovki, also produced Byzantine gold coins, often in relatively great numbers. In all three cases, the last coins were minted for Emperor Constans II (641–68).⁴³

The dating of group VI is more difficult, for there are no coin finds, with the exception of Iosipivka, which produced a perforated coin of Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine (613–41). All other graves can be dated only on the basis of perforated belt mounts and straps. Such dress accessories signalize the use of a belt with multiple, secondary, straps, which was first used in Sassanian Persia, as indicated by the Taq-i Bostan reliefs dated to Khusro II's reign (590–628). The belt with multiple straps did not originate in the steppe milieu, for the earliest assemblages with belt mounts from the early sixth century were found in Transcaucasia. The number of graves with belt mounts and strapends increased suddenly in the mid-500s in both Transcaucasia and Crimea.⁴⁴ Perforated specimens, commonly known as "Martynovka mounts" became popular in the steppes north and northeast of the Black Sea only in the second half of the sixth century and the early seventh century.⁴⁵

⁴³ Malo Pereshchepino: Werner 1984a; Kelegeia: Bálint 1989:95; Glodosy: Smilenko 1965; Zachevilovki: Smilenko 1968; Voznesenka: Grichenko 1950; Bálint 1989:92–4. The interpretation of the Malo Pereshchepino assemblage as burial has been disputed, for no human bones were found on site. See Kazanski and Sodini 1987:72; Schulze-Dörlamm 1987b; Joachim Werner argued in favor of a funerary assemblage, pointing to fragments of gold sheet bearing traces of wood, which he interpreted as casket mounts. Knowing that the assemblage was accidentally found in 1912 and no systematic excavations were ever carried out on the site, there is no way to decide whether or not Malo Pereshchepino was a specific, ritual, site of a kind illustrated by the Voznesenka assemblage. By contrast, the site at Glodosy produced cremated fragments of a male skeleton (twenty to forty years old). See Smilenko 1965:7–10; Joachim Werner (1984a:17) also argued that all sixty-eight coins found at Malo Pereshchepino belonged to a "ceremonial or marriage belt," for they were each perforated and decorated with a cabochon applied on the obverse. See also Bálint 1985:139–40. For the coins found at Kelegeia, see Kropotkin 1962:37.

⁴⁴ Werner 1974:132; Somogyi 1987:138; Bálint 1992:327 and 1993:220; Fiedler 1994a:35 and 46. Judging from the iconography of the Taq-i Bostan reliefs, the number of secondary straps indicated social rank, for the use of as many as ten or twelve straps was restricted to the king, while lesser nobles wore only three to six straps. Belts as symbols of social status appear in contemporary Byzantium. See Martini and Steckner 1993:134–6. For examples of buckles used in association with belts with multiple straps, see Schulze-Dörlamm 1987a:802 and 803 fig. 63; Bálint 1992:324 and 438 pl. 2/1.

⁴⁵ Nándor Fethich was the first to link the Martynovka hoard to assemblages with perforated belt mounts. He also coined the phrase "Martynovka mounts." At Mokraia balka, in Transcaucasia, perforated belt mounts appear in the second interment phase of the cemetery, dated with coins

Nevertheless, the use of a buckled belt became so strongly associated with the horsemen of the steppe that an early seventh-century Egyptian papyrus referred to such dress accessories as "Bulgar belts." The distribution of perforated belt mounts and strapends confirms this association (Figure 19). Belts with "Martynovka mounts" were in use in the Balkan provinces of the Empire during the sixth century, as demonstrated by their presence in both forts and burial assemblages excavated south of the Danube river. They were in use in "Gepidia" even before the arrival of the Avars, as shown by burial no. 29 at Szentes-Nagyhegy, in which a "Martynovka mount" was found in association with a Sucedava belt-buckle, a dress accessory most typical for early Byzantine forts of the Justinianic age. In Avar assemblages dated shortly after c. 600, "Martynovka mounts" are a familiar presence.⁴⁶

Assemblages with perforated belt mounts and strapends are therefore earlier than rich burials such as Malo Pereshchepino, Zachevilovki, or Glodosy, which include only mounts and strapends with granulated ornament. The best analogies for these burials are both late Early Avar assemblages, such as Bócsa and Kunbábony (dated to the second third of the seventh century), or Middle Avar assemblages of the so-called Tópuszta–Dunapentele–Igar group, some of which produced coins minted for the emperors Constans II and Constantine IV. They are also paralleled by the earliest archaeological evidence attributed to the Bulgars in Bulgaria, namely that from burial no. 5 from Madara. Gold belt mounts and strapends with granulated ornament found in this burial are considered as the latest of their kind.⁴⁷

The different date and interpretation of these two groups of burials in the steppes north of the Black Sea becomes even more evident when we introduce another class of evidence, that of hoards of silver and bronze

of the Sassanian king Kavad I (488–531). See Afanas'ev 1979:47. Perforated mounts were also found in neighboring forts built under Emperor Justinian. See Afanas'ev 1975:53 and 60. In Crimea, perforated belt mounts were in use in the mid-sixth century, as suggested by their association with coins of Justinian. See Repnikov 1966:15–16; Afanas'ev 1979:47. The analysis of the Suuk Su cemetery indicates that access to belts with perforated mounts was restricted to adults, both female and male. See Uenze 1992:170. For perforated mounts at Skaltstoe, see Veimarn and Aibabin 1993:12–3.

⁴⁶ For "Bulgar belts" in the papyrus Erzherzog Rainer 9010, see Wessely 1889:242; Setton 1950:324; Bálint 1992:415. Buckled belts have often been associated with trousers or tights, a garment believed to have been introduced by barbarian soldiers of the Roman army. See Russell 1982:146. However, as the Taq-i Bostan reliefs suggest belts with multiple straps were worn with tunics. See Martini and Steckner 1993:133. In other cases, perforated belt mounts (such as Somogyi's class A 9) may have been used to attach shoe straps. See Bálint 1992:357. Perforated belt mounts in forts: Opaif 1990:46 fig. 18/53–7; Uenze 1992: pl. 11/1–5, 8–10, 14–17. "Martynovka mounts" in burial assemblages: Petre 1987:pl. 130 fig. 207 d–e; Alexandrescu and Vilcanu 1962:402 fig. 5/1; Vaklinova 1989:136 fig. 2. Szentes-Nagyhegy: Csallány 1961:50–1 and pl. xxv/14.

⁴⁷ Bócsa and Kunbábony: Tóth and Horváth 1992. Tópuszta–Dunapentele–Igar group: Garam 1976:140 and 1995:129; Madara: Fiedler 1992:143–4 and 1994a:47; Garam 1988:162 and 167. For analogies in Transcaucasia, see Atavin and Paronov 1991.

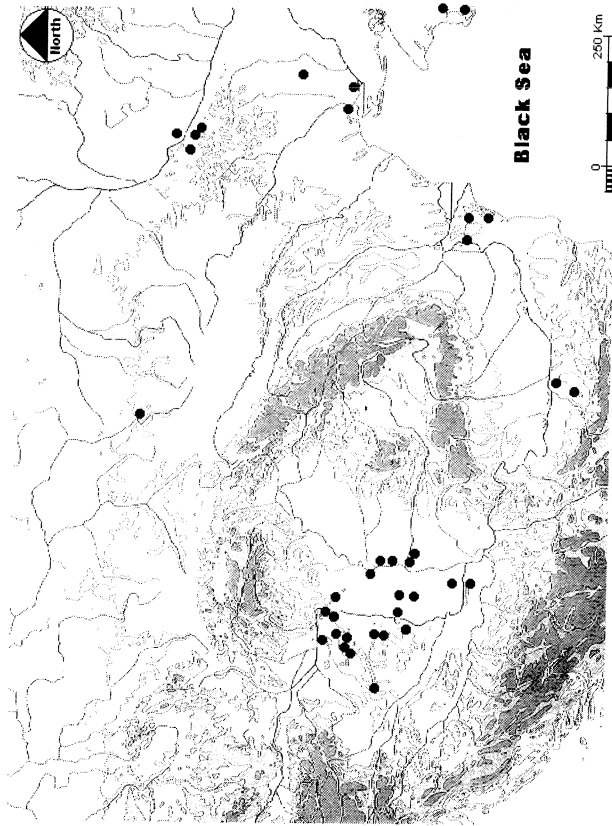


Figure 19 Distribution of perforated, Martynovka-type belt straps

(Figures 20–3). A. A. Spicyn called them “Antian antiquities,” because he believed their distribution matched Procopius and Jordanes’ description of the Antes. His idea had a remarkable influence on the development of Soviet archaeology, particularly after World War II. Many embraced G. F. Korzukhina’s very influential suggestion that both the distribution and the composition of hoards of silver and bronze from the forest-steppe belt were different from those of rich burials of the steppe area. No hoards were found in the steppe area and none included either weapons or horse gear. By contrast, no burial produced such artifacts as bow fibulae or earrings with star-shaped pendant. This contrast has been interpreted as an indication of two different ethnic groups: the nomads (burials) and the Slavic Antes (the hoards). The distribution in the area north of the Black Sea of sixth- and seventh-century burials and hoards of silver and bronze, respectively, are indeed in sharp contrast (Figure 24).⁴⁸

A cluster analysis of eighteen hoards of silver and bronze and five burials by means of chi-square distance, which accounts for differences in

⁴⁸ Spicyn 1928; Korzukhina 1955:69 and 71–2. Spicyn attributed to the Antes not only hoards, but also burials with bow fibulae. For an example of burial with bow fibulae in Left Bank Ukraine, see Aksenov and Babenko 1998:113. By contrast, M. I. Artamonov (1969) attributed both hoards and burials to the (Curritur) nomads. For a critique of Artamonov’s theories, see Tet’iakov 1971.

total quantity of types in the assemblage, gives, however, a picture radically different from that suggested by Korzukhina (Figure 25).⁴⁹ Rich burials belong to the same cluster as hoards of silver and bronze, such as Kharyvki and Zemiansky Vrbovok. With a correspondence analysis, a technique recently introduced to archaeology, the relationships between hoards, between artifact-categories, and between artifact-categories and hoards may be all analyzed together and represented in the same scattergram or series of scattergrams produced by the plotting of pairs of orthogonal axes. What catches the eye at first on the scattergram showing the relationships between assemblages is the clear segregation between hoards and burials (Figure 26). An examination of the second scattergram, which represents relationships between artifact-categories found in both hoards and burials, indicates this split to be a chronological one (Figure 27). Burials are characterized by the presence of swords with typical cross-bars, similar to those depicted on seventh- and eighth-century Soghdian silverware or in fresco scenes at Afrasiab and Pendzhikent. Earrings with bead-pendants, such as found at Malo Pereshchepino, Glodosy, and Zachepilovki, are typically associated with Middle Avar assemblages. A specimen of this category was found at Ozora-Tópuszta in association with a solidus minted for Emperor Constantine IV.⁵⁰

By contrast, hoards are characterized by the presence of repoussé bronze pendants, an artifact-category frequently encountered in Early Avar assemblages, but not later. Such pendants were only found with female burials. They might have belonged to corolla-type head-dresses

⁴⁹ Iakhmiki: Braichevskii 1952a:45–6. Khacki: Bobrinskii 1901:147–8 and pl. xiv. Kharyvki: Berezovec 1952. Koloskovo: Liapushkin 1901:186–7 and 185 fig. 87. Kozievka: Rybakov 1953:66–7. Krylos: Kropotkin 1970 and 1971. Mali Rzhavet: Rybakov 1953:74–6 and 75 fig. 16. Martynovka: Prikhodniuk et al. 1991; Pekarskaja and Kidd 1994. Nova Odessa: Rybakov 1953:67 and 69 fig. 13. Pastys’ke: Braichevskii 1952b. Poltava: Braichevskii 1952a:46–7. Sudzha: Rybakov 1949. Veliki Kuchurov (Kucurmare): Noll 1974; Gschwandtler 1993. Velikie Budki: Romanova 1983:311; Gorionova 1987:85–7. Vyl’khovchik: Prikhodniuk 1980:129 and 99 fig. 61. Zalesie: Ugrin 1987. Zemiansky Vrbovok: Svoboda 1953. I left aside two hoards, which included only one or two artifact-categories: Grigoryvka, with only five earrings with star-shaped pendant; and Halič, with a necklace and two earrings with star-shaped pendant. See Prikhodniuk 1980:131; Garam 1980:172 and fig. 7. Not considered was the hoard from Tepe, for which I have been unable to find complete information. See, however, Thomas 1988:143. My analysis also excludes hoards of Sasanian silver, such as Khoniakovo, Pavlovka, and Sloboda Limarovka, for which see Bienkowski 1929 and Bálint 1989:106 and 108–9. Despite lack of irrefutable evidence, I assumed that the finds from Martynovka and Kharyvki were hoards, not burials. See Kidd and Pekarskaya 1995.

⁵⁰ Swords with cross-bars: Ambroz 1986:63; L’vova and Semenov 1985:83. For earrings with bead-pendant, see Garam 1992:150. The correspondence analysis belongs to a group of data reduction methods, which became popular in the archaeological literature in the late 1980s. The method was first developed in the 1960s in France by J. P. Benzécri and his team of the laboratory for the Mathematical Statistics at the University of Paris VI. The first to adopt the correspondence analysis were Scandinavian archaeologists. See Bolviken et al. 1982. Its adoption by American and British archaeologists came comparatively later. For the algebra, see Shennan 1990:283–6; Ringrose 1992. For various statistical methods and their use in archaeology, see also Djindjian 1990.

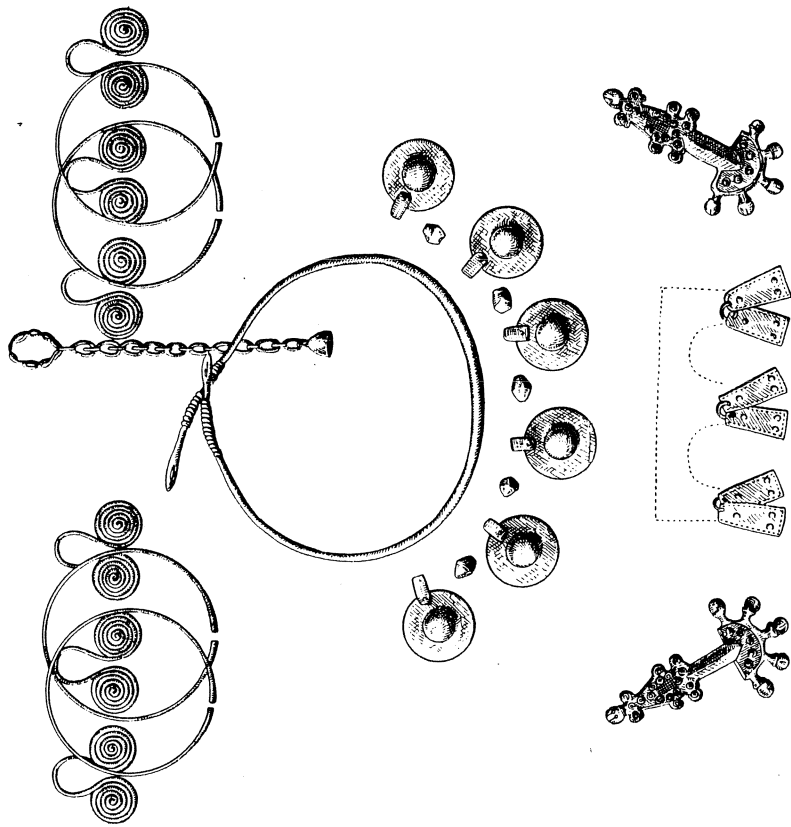


Figure 20 An early seventh-century hoard of silver and bronze from Sudzha

Source: Rybakov 1953: 64 fig. 11.

or head-bands or might have trimmed veils or lappets hanging from the head-dress. Hoards produced other artifact-categories typically associated with Early Avar assemblages, such as "Martynovka mounts" and "Slavic" bow fibulae. The latter will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Brooches with bent stems, such as those found at Koloskovo, Nova Odessa, Gaponovo, or Kozievka, have good parallels in seventh-century funerary assemblages in Albania.⁵¹

⁵¹ Repoussé bronze pendants: Szatmári 1980:100-1; Comşa 1984:70; Kiss 1996:201; Fiedler 1996:206-8. The closest parallel for the silver bow brooch with peacocks from Martynovka is that found in an Early Avar female burial at Kolked (Kiss 1996:201). For fibulae in seventh-century assemblages in Albania (the so-called "Koman culture"), see Goriunov and Kazanskii 1978:26; Vinski 1971:388; Uenze 1992:153-4.

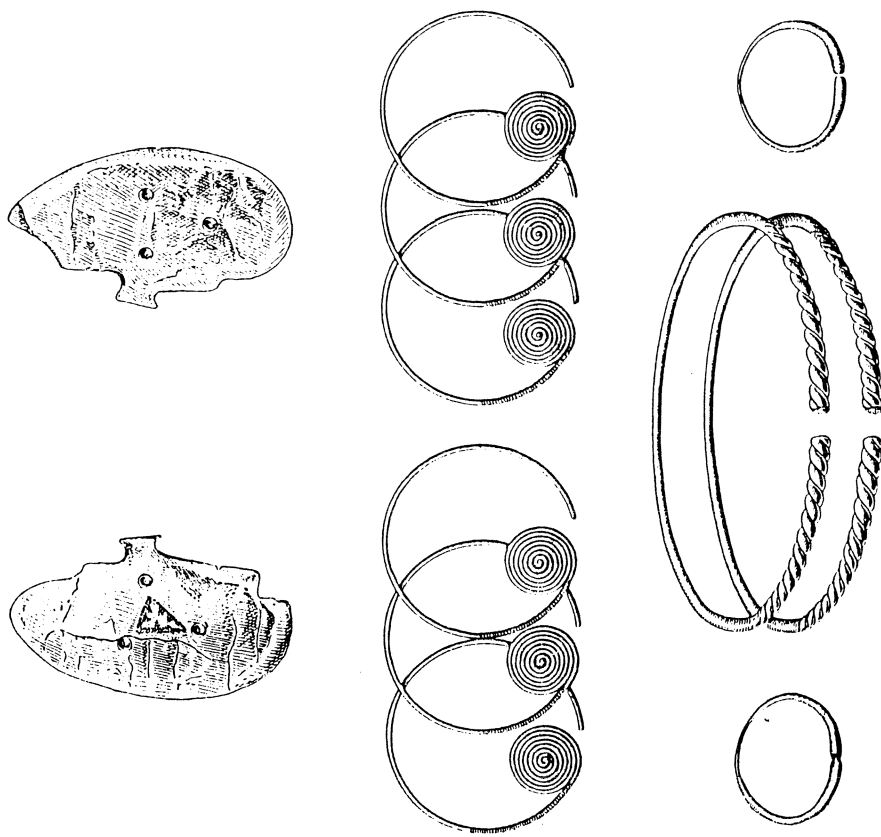


Figure 21 An early seventh-century hoard of silver and bronze from Malii Rzhavec

Source: Rybakov 1953: 75 fig. 16.

Burials such as Glodosy, Voznesenka, Kelegetia, and Malo Pereshchepino also produced Sassanian silverware. Hoards often display sets of Byzantine stamped silverware manufactured as *largitio* objects for imperial distribution. Four control stamps on the base of the Martynovka cup are from the reign of Justin II, possibly from 577, when Theodore Petrus was the *comes sacrarum largitionum*. The closest analogy for the large goblet is the chalice found at Kaper Koraon, stamped in 605-10. Five stamps on the base of the large silver bucket (*situla*) from Veliki Kuchurov are from 613-29/30. Like most other groups of silver plate in "barbarian"

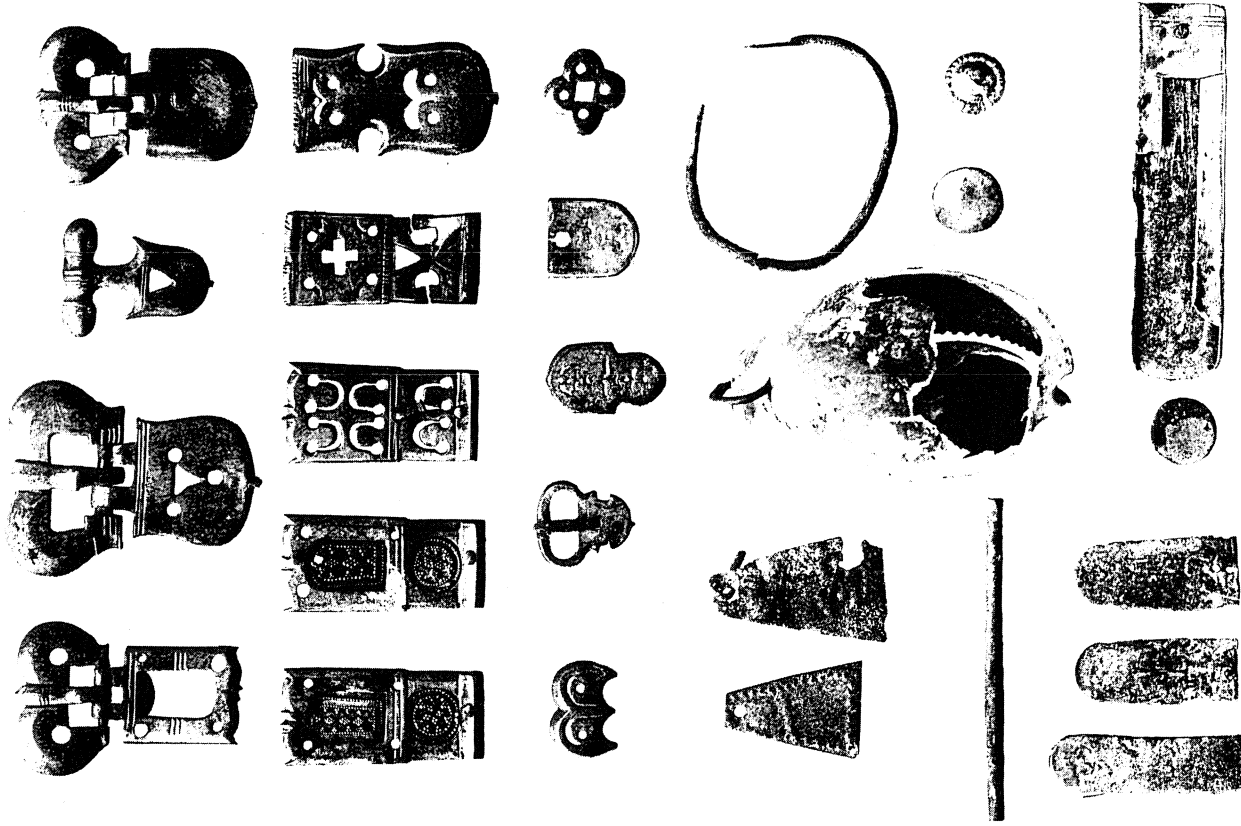


Figure 22 An early seventh-century hoard of silver and bronze from Khacki
Source: Bobrinskii 1901: p. xix

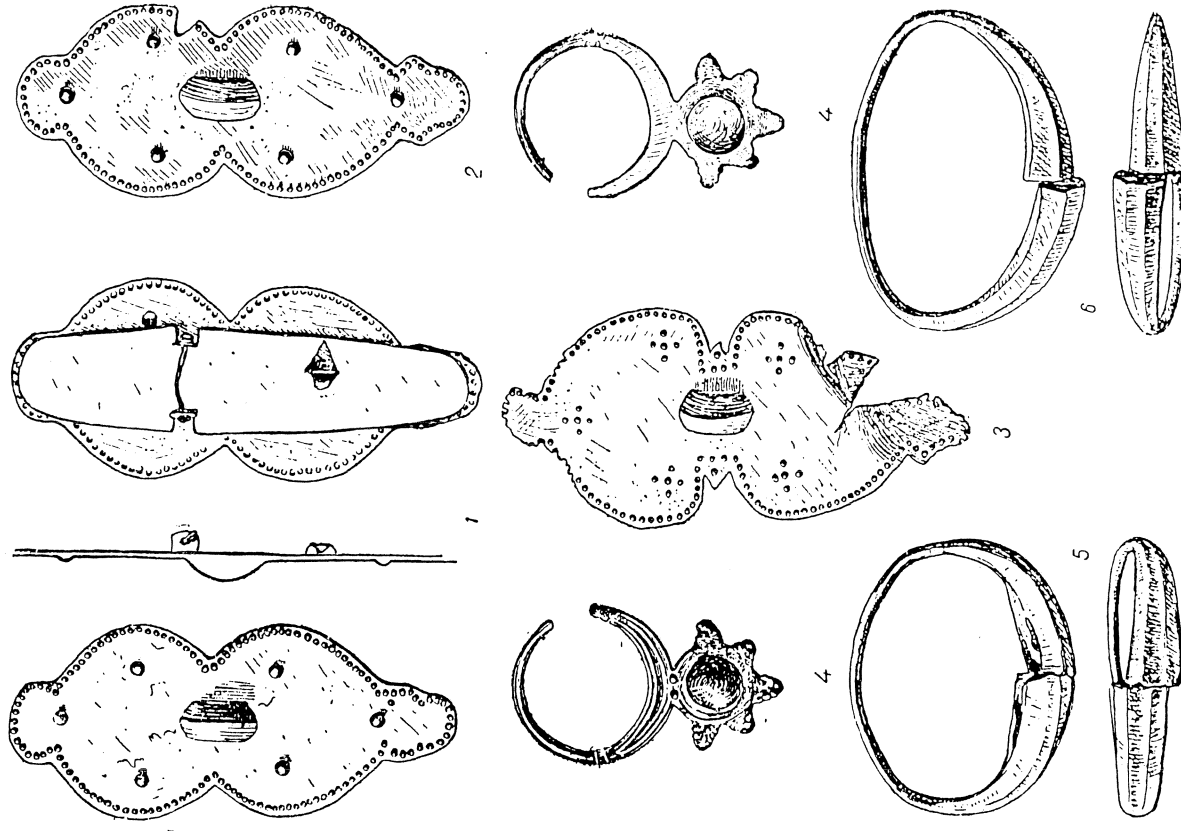


Figure 23 A seventh-century hoard of silver from Pastys'ke
Source: Bratchevskii 1952b: pl. 1.

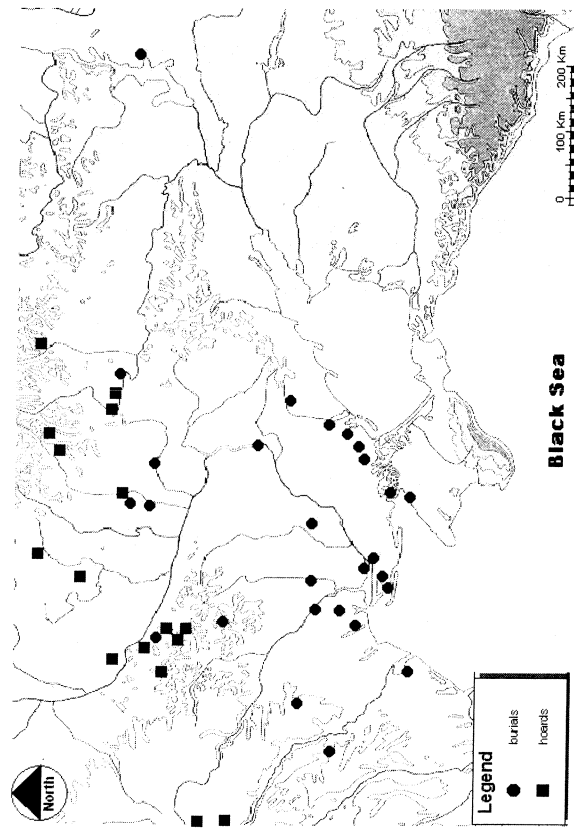


Figure 24 Distribution of sixth- to seventh-century burials and hoards in the area north of the Black Sea

Europe, such as Sutton Hoo or finds from the Kama region, hoards display almost complete functional sets, with large plates, drinking vessels (goblets, cups, or bowls), and washing vessels (buckets, ewers, or basin). Since stamps not only guaranteed silver purity, but also authorized release of state silver, hoards with stamped Byzantine silverware are good indicators of the distribution of people important enough to own them. As diplomatic gifts or some other form of imperial largesse, Byzantine silver indicates that hoards with "Martynovka mounts" were not equivalent to "burials of commoners," but truly symbolized the highest social status.⁵²

However, not all hoards of silver and bronze were contemporary. A seriation of seventeen hoards reveals two groups, with the Martynovka hoard at an intermediary position (Figure 28). Applying a correspondence analysis to the same data, it becomes clear that we are actually dealing with three different groups (Figure 29). The second scattergram representing relationships between artifact-categories indicates three

⁵² Painter 1988:104; Mango 1992:214–15 and 1993:80–1. A goblet similar to that from Martynovka was found in a sixth-century fort near Haskovo (Bulgaria). See Gerasimova-Tomova 1987. For the Veliki Kuchurov *stila*, see Gschwanter 1993:177 and 178 fig. 6. There is no known analogy for the control stamp on the Krylos silver bowl (Kropotkin 1971:68). For the silver spoon from Martynovka, see Hauser 1992:36. Such artifacts signalize social status, not Christian beliefs, since they were certainly not baptismal spoons. See Simoni 1988:82; Hauser 1992:81. *Contrib*: Petrikovits 1966:181; Dănilă 1986:91.

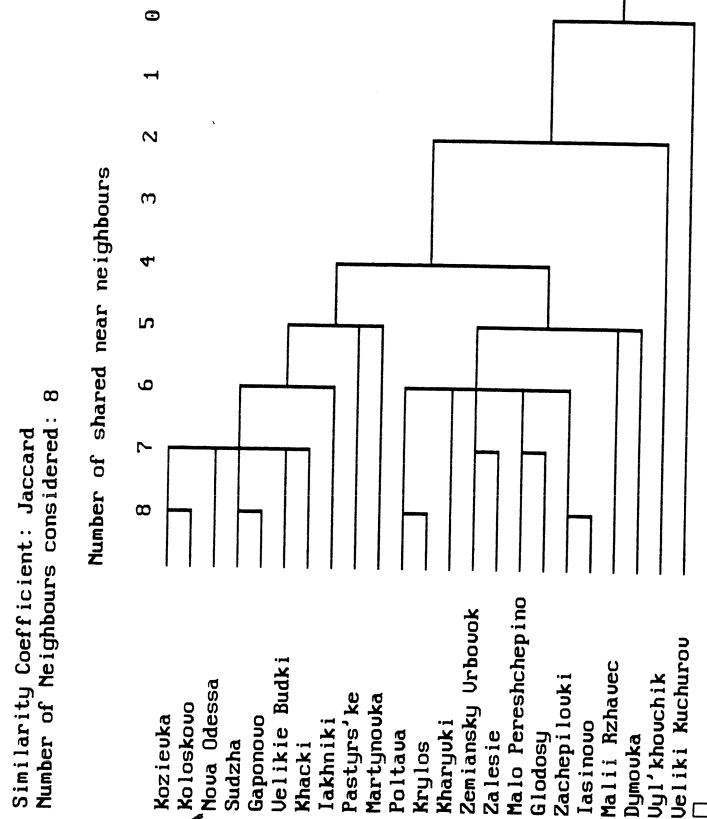


Figure 25 Cluster analysis of eighteen hoards of silver and bronze and five burials found in the area north of the Black Sea, in relation to the artifact-categories found in them

different chronological phases (Figure 30). Velikie Budki, Kozievka, Koloskovo, Nova Odessa, Gaponovo, Sudzha, Khacki, Iakhniki, and Malii Rzhavac are all earlier than Martynovka, Pasturs'ke, Poltava, and Kharyuki, which, in turn, are earlier than Krylos, Zalesie, Veliki Kuchurov, and Zemiansky Vrbouk. Earlier hoards are characterized by repoussé bronze pendants, "Slavic" bow fibulae, "Martynovka mounts," lead mounts, and brooches with bent stems, while later hoards include earrings with bead or star-shaped pendants. The association of earrings with star-shaped pendants with miliaresia of Constant II in the Zemiansky Vrbouk hoard and with hexagrams of Constantine IV in the almost contemporary coin hoard of Priseaca, shows that the third phase represented on the first scattergram coincides in time with rich burials, such as Malo Pereshchepino or Zachepilouki.⁵³

⁵³ Earrings associated with coins of Constant II and Constantine IV; Svoboda 1953:33–108; Mircea 1975. Earrings with star-shaped pendants also appear in late seventh-century funerary assemblages in Albania. See Anamali 1993b:443.

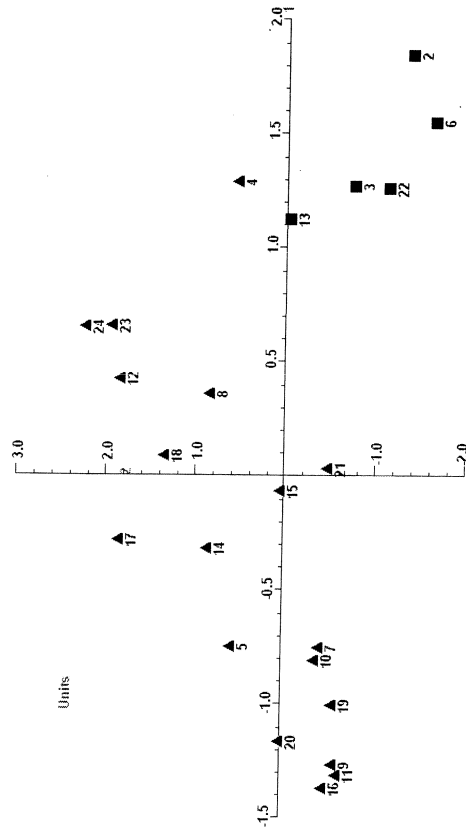


Figure 26 Correspondence analysis of eighteen hoards of silver and bronze and five burials found in the area north of the Black Sea

2 – Dymovka; 3 – Glodosty; 4 – Veliki Kuchurov; 5 – Iakhniki; 6 – Iasinovo; 7 – Khacki; 8 – Kharyvki; 9 – Koloskovo; 10 – Gaponovo; 11 – Kozievka; 12 – Krylos; 13 – Malo Pereshchepino; 14 – Malii Rzhavet; 15 – Marynovka; 16 – Nova Odessa; 17 – Pastys'ke; 18 – Poltava; 19 – Sudzha; 20 – Velikie Budki; 21 – Vyl'khovchik; 22 – Zachepilovki; 23 – Zalesie; 24 – Zemiansky Vrbovok. Triangles represent hoards, rectangles represent burials

That Martynovka should be placed somewhere between the earliest and the latest hoards is suggested by the chronology of the nine anthropomorphic and zoomorphic mounts, traditionally said to have been used for the decoration of the saddle. Such mounts were found in late sixth- and early seventh-century burials at Pregradnaia and Kugul (North Caucasus), in association with "Martynovka mounts." Similar specimens come from three early seventh-century burials in the Castel Trovino cemetery in Italy. Moreover, zoomorphic mounts were also found in the Malo Pereshchepino assemblage, dated to the second half of the seventh century, and in a collection of mounts from Thessaly, also from the seventh century.⁵⁴

The interpretation of this pattern is most difficult, because of the lack of contextual information. It is clear, however, that the meaning behind hoards of silver and/or bronze did not remain constant. That the same

⁵⁴ Saddle mounts: László 1955:276–84; Ambroz 1989:78–80; Swietoslawski 1993:284; Kidd and Pekarskaya 1995:352. See also Vallet 1995:335; Werner 1953 and 1984:29; Kidd 1992. For a saddle mount from Sardis wrongly interpreted as *Trefibel*, see Waldbaum 1983:117 and pl. 43/688. For finds from the Crkvine cemetery near Salona, see Vinski 1967:17 and 1970:701–2 and 703 fig. 1. A bronze model for the production of saddle mounts was found in the Biskupija hoard (Croatia). See Korosec 1958b.

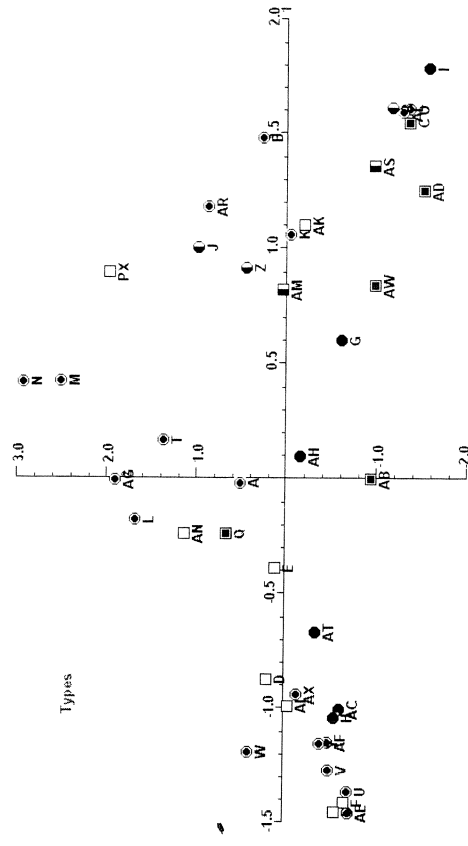


Figure 27 Correspondence analysis of artifact-categories from eighteen hoards of silver and bronze and five burials found in the area north of the Black Sea

A – armband with enlarged ends; AB – spear; AC – "Martynovka mounts"; AD – bridle bit; AE – brooch with bent stem; AF – "Slavic" bow brooch; AG – shield-shaped bow brooch; AH – pseudo-buckle; AI – chain; AK – finger-ring; AL – cup; AM – horse-harness mounts; AN – silver ingot; AO – neckring with embossed decoration; AP – collar; AR – necklace; AS – stirrup; AT – silver sheet strap; AV – cast strap with scrollwork decoration; AW – sword; AX – earring with spiral-end; AZ – seashells; B – hinge bracelet; C – arrow-head; D – amber beads; E – glass beads; F – jingle bells; G – cast belt mounts; H – buckle (Suctava class); I – rectangular buckle; J – chalice; K – silver or gold coin; L – silver wire earring; M – earring with star-shaped pendant; N – earring with globe-pendant; O – earring with bead pendant; P – silver goblet; Q – helmet check-piece; R – jug; S – lead mounts; T – neckring with widened ends; U – hat-shaped pendant; V – repoussé bronze pendant; W – circular bronze pendant; Y – sceptacle-shaped pendant; Z – silver plate

type of hoard may be found in areas hundreds of kilometers apart raises important questions about demographic mobility, spread of fashions, and, ultimately, the significance of hoards. It is also interesting to note that later hoards were found north of the Carpathian basin, while earlier ones cluster in the Middle Dnieper area. Spicyn's interpretation cannot be accepted, for the simple reason that no hoard can be dated earlier than c. 600. At that time, according to the literary sources analyzed in Chapter 3, the Antes had already ceased to exist politically. If not ethnicity, then what? There is nothing in these hoards that is obviously utilitarian, and in most cases we can use the evidence of contemporary funerary assemblages to infer that some, if not all, artifact-categories were female dress-accessories. Later hoards present some connections with contemporary, very rich, burials, which seem to have been male graves, for they produced weapons and horse gear. The lack of representation of high-status

Input Correlation: 0.2624 Output Correlation: 0.8158 % Variance: 17.1961

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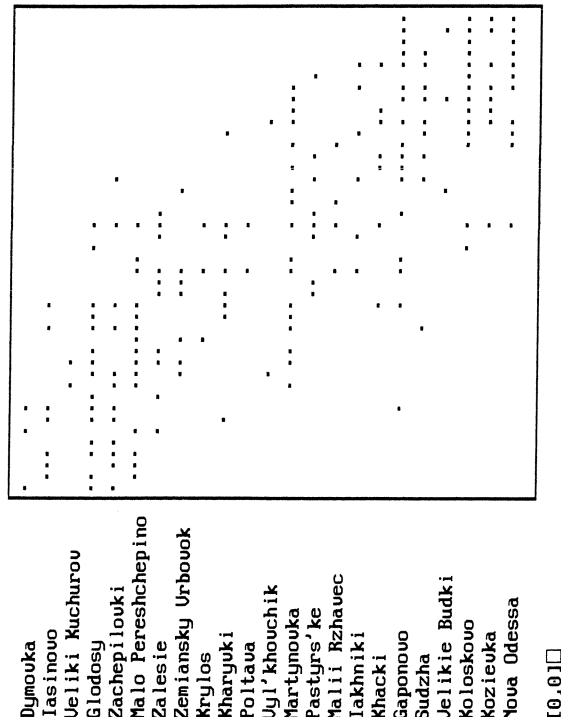


Figure 28 Seriation of seventeen hoards found in the area north of the Black Sea

For abbreviations, see Figure 27

women in burials at this time suggests that, unlike the situation in the Carpathian basin, women were not vehicles for displaying the status of their husbands. What, then, is the significance of hoards, at least of earlier ones, in which female dress accessories played such an important role?

Hoard of silver were certainly not collections of raw silver or "hack-silver." There are no broken objects and no metalworking residues. The deliberate choice of items, usually found in pairs or more than two specimens, and the value attached to Byzantine silver seem to indicate conspicuous consumption of a type known to anthropologists as potlatch. In times of social and political stress, such consumption may have served a number of functions, such as celebrating rites of passage or succession to office. It certainly was the privilege of an aristocratic group and probably involved the provision of food and of certain other valuables that did not

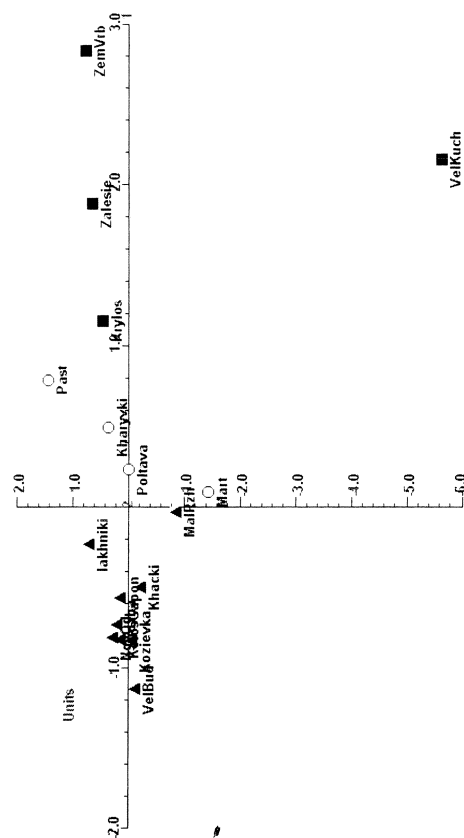


Figure 29 Correspondence analysis of seventeen hoards found in the area north of the Black Sea

Legend: phase I — triangle; phase III — rectangle

survive in the archaeological record.⁵⁵ Lavish offerings such as hoards of silver, involving the deposition in locations from which items could not be recovered, might have provided a way of fixing status and of claiming the prestige associated with it. Initially, female dress accessories were as common currency for this type of social behavior as women were for displaying the status of their husbands. Contemporary male burials (with or without horse skeletons) are comparatively much poorer than hoards of silver. In the late 600s, however, men assumed this role for themselves and extremely rich burials with a vast array of gold (rather than silver) grave-goods dwarfed displays of wealth through hoarded silver.

CONCLUSION

There are at least three important conclusions to be drawn from this sweeping survey of the archaeology of the Carpathian basin and the

⁵⁵ Artifacts in the Khacki hoard were wrapped in silk (Bobriinski 1901:147). It is tempting to associate the burial of earlier hoards, for which a date may be tentatively assigned to c. 630, with the beginning of the civil war within the western division of the Gök Türk Empire and the subsequent rise of the Bulgar qaganate. However, both were located in Left Bank Ukraine and the steppe north of the Caucasus mountains, at a considerable distance from the main concentration of hoards in the Middle Dnieper area. Moreover, the hoarding phenomenon clearly continued through the second half of the seventh century, as hoards were buried in Volhynia and Slovakia.

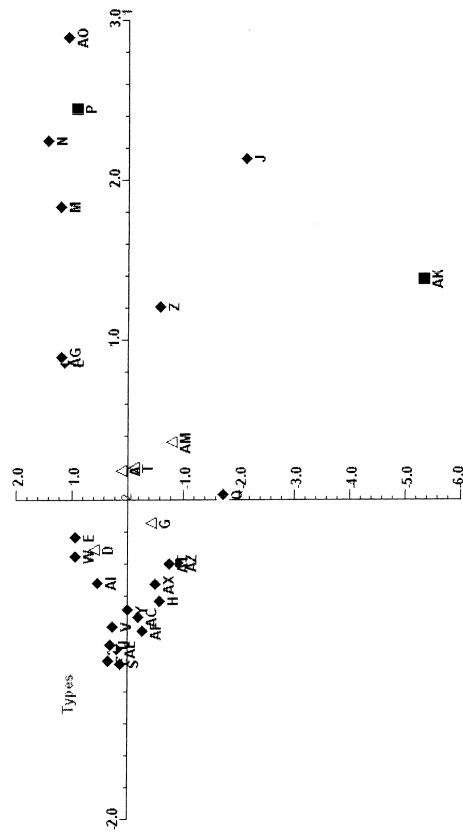


Figure 30 Correspondence analysis of seventeen hoards found in the area north of the Black Sea and their respective artifact-categories

For abbreviations, see Figure 27

steppe north of the Black Sea. First, in all cases discussed in this chapter, material culture may be and was indeed used for the construction of social identities. Despite interaction across the buffer zone between the Danube and the Tisza rivers, clear material culture distinctions were maintained in a wide range of artifacts. The nature and function of these distinctions is very similar to those identified by Ian Hodder in the Baringo district of Kenya. As in East Africa, material culture contrasts were maintained in order to justify between-group competition and negative reciprocity. Displays of emblematic styles were particularly important at the time of the Lombard–Gepid wars in the mid-500s. More often than not, such styles were associated with the status of aristocratic women, wives, daughters, or mothers of “kings.” This may be a result of the special emphasis laid on public representation of group identity, but may also be an indication of the intricate relationship between ethnic and gender identity.

The examination of hoards of silver and bronze also shows that women were symbolic vehicles for the construction of social identities. In this case, however, it is more difficult to decide precisely what kind of identity was constructed through displays of female dress accessories. Unlike the Carpathian basin, the specific way in which identity was expressed was not funerary assemblage but lavish offering of silver and bronze artifacts, which may have represented a particular form of potlatch.

However, just as with displays of wealth in rich female graves, deposition of hoards may have served as “tournaments of value.”⁵⁶ Like funerals, hoards were used for social display mainly during periods of instability when the status of the individual needed underlining. An important route to social advancement was most likely access to foreign goods, such as Byzantine silver plate. Within the Empire, the social status which silver plate conferred or reflected was often seen in terms of wealth and power. The donation of family silver to be recycled into liturgical silver or given to the poor became a literary *topos*. In “barbarian” contexts, transactions in which silver plate was symbolically displayed were certainly different. To claim that acquisition, imitation, and use of Roman silver plate reflects the degree to which barbarians were Romanized⁵⁷ is simply to ignore that the symbolic system changed with the changing contexts in which imported objects were employed. There can be no doubt, however, that Byzantine silver plate *was* viewed as “exotic” and “precious” for an image of power, for stamped objects were only produced for imperial distribution. The ability to acquire fine *largitio* objects carried a considerable premium. The same is true for objects of possibly Sassanian origin, such as the Zemianský Vrbovok bowl. On the other hand, that hoards of silver conveyed an image of power much stronger than grave-goods may be deduced from the fact that some contain several sets of ornaments, which suggests that such collections were the property of more than one person. In other words, hoards of silver and bronze may have permitted a more “extravagant” display of metalwork than the provision of grave-goods.

Finally, the survey of the archaeological evidence from the Carpathian basin and the steppe north of the Black Sea strongly suggests that in order for material culture to participate in the construction of social identities, artifacts need to be given meaning in social context. Swords with P-shaped sheath attachments or stirrups with elongated attachment loops were not “Avar” because of being of Central Asian origin, but because of being used in a specific way in specific transactions (such as display of grave-goods) in the new social milieu in which Avar warriors found themselves after c. 570. Similarly, there are no specific “Lombard” or “Gepid” brooches, for many fibulae found in female burials on both sides of the “no man’s land” either were “imported” from distant locations or imitated such exotic imports. There is, therefore, no “phenotypic” expression of a preformed ethnic identity, though identity is constructed by manipulating *certain* artifact-categories. The value of each of these artifact-categories depended less on questions of supply and origin than on the social strategies employed by those who used them. On the other

⁵⁶ The phrase is that of Bradley 1990:139.

⁵⁷ Mango 1995:81.

hand, objects that are the prerogative of an elite may be imitated by lower-ranking groups. "Citations" from the material culture discourse which can be identified in rich burials or hoards may be found in completely different contexts, such as settlements. As I will argue in the last chapter, just as in the case of "Lombard" and "Gepid" identities, Slavic ethnicity may have been communicated through displays of objects whose use was restricted to local elites. In such cases, artifacts similar to those found in Ukrainian hoards are not mere analogies. They have become metaphors.

Chapter 6

ELITES AND GROUP IDENTITY NORTH OF
THE DANUBE FRONTIER: THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

If the social label of various ethnic identities in *barbaricum*, both East and West, can be pinned down to material culture, matters are more difficult when it comes to the symbols by which Slavic ethnicity may have been expressed. Archaeologists, from Ivan Borkovský to Volodymyr Baran, have focused on specific artifacts, particularly pottery, in an effort to reconstruct a "Slavic culture" by which Slavic ethnicity may be then identified at any place and time. In the first chapter, I discussed the problems and difficulties involved in this approach. I will attempt now to show that, just as with contemporary Gepids, Lombards, or Bulgars, no particular item was ethnically specific to the Slavs. Material culture, nevertheless, played a crucial role in building ethnic boundaries. The social mechanisms by which artifacts were manipulated and used for statements of group identity may well have been at work in "Sclavinia," just as in "Lombardia" or "Gepidia."

A survey of Slavic archaeology is beyond the scope of this work. By default, a discussion of Slavic ethnicity will entail only certain aspects of the Slavic culture, if such a thing ever existed. Instead of a standard description of material culture items, which is the current practice with monographs on the Slavic culture,¹ I will focus on only three issues, which I believe are relevant for the formation of a Slavic *ethnie*.

First, I will examine problems of chronology, which are fundamental for the understanding of changes in material culture and their historical background. Much too often, archaeologists have imposed the rigid framework of written sources on the archaeological record, without acknowledging chronological discrepancies. Second, I will focus on a specific group of bow fibulae, which the German archaeologist Joachim Werner first called "Slavic" brooches.² More than any other artifact-category (with the exception, perhaps, of pottery), this group of fibulae

¹ E.g., Parczewski 1993.

² Werner 1950.