

# SARMATIANS IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

## THE FIRST SARMATIANS ON THE HUNGARIAN PLAIN: ROUTES, TERRITORIES, CHRONOLOGY AND THE EARLIEST FIND ASSEMBLAGES<sup>490</sup>

*The issue [...] can be settled [...] once the counterparts of the earliest assemblages are found in the lands previously occupied by the lazygians [...]*<sup>491</sup>

One of the perhaps most debated issues in Sarmatian studies of the Carpathian Basin is the question of the Sarmatians' arrival, and the date and route of successive population waves. The initial period of Sarmatian research marked by Párducz's work was briefly reviewed by Kóhegyi, who was the first to offer a survey of the early Sarmatian (lazygian) finds from the Hungarian Plain. Kóhegyi noted that »there are relatively few secure anchors regarding chronology and earlier settlement territories.« Although countless studies have been devoted to these problems since then, a convincing answer is still lacking, even for the most important questions. A brief overview of previous research in this field has recently been published by Vaday and Szekeres<sup>492</sup>. Although Kóhegyi's expectation that »this issue [...] can be settled [...] once the counterparts of the earliest assemblages are found in the lands previously occupied by the lazygians«<sup>493</sup> has still not been fulfilled, the more recent findings of Russian, Ukrainian and Romanian researchers have opened new perspectives for contextualising the relevant find assemblages. The question of the earliest Sarmatian group(s) arriving in and settling the Carpathian Basin will be discussed in the light of these findings.

It must be borne in mind that the Sarmatians did not arrive in the Carpathian Basin as the result of a single migration<sup>494</sup>. This section will focus on the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> century or, to be more precise, of the period preceding Trajan's war against the Dacians.

### The Written Sources

The relevant written sources referring to the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin were gathered together and analysed by Patsch and Alföldi in their groundbreaking, masterly works. A new bilingual collection of the source material relevant to Pannonia edited by Fehér and Kovács appeared a few years ago and is an indispensable textbook for Sarmatian research in Hungary<sup>495</sup>.

Two passages are usually cited when attempting to determine the arrival of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin. The first was a report by Tacitus:

At this same time, Vannius, whom Drusus Caesar had made king of the Suevi, was driven from his kingdom. [...] Vannius's own native force was infantry, and his cavalry was from the

<sup>490</sup> This chapter is a revised version of Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2006a.

<sup>491</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 268.

<sup>492</sup> Párducz 1935. – Kóhegyi 1982, 267-268. – Vaday/Szekeres 2000, 231. For the latest evaluation of the early Sarmatian finds, see Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2006a.

<sup>493</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 268.

<sup>494</sup> There have been several attempts to separate the Sarmatian finds according to tribes(?) or, at least, according to the migration waves: Párducz 1950a, 120-121. – Harmatta 1970, 41-57. – Simonenko 1993b. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1993b. However, most of these attempts are not particularly convincing.

<sup>495</sup> Patsch 1928; 1929; 1937. – Alföldi 1942a. – Fehér/Kovács 2005a; 2005b.– Kovács 2006; 2007; 2008.

*lazyges of Sarmatia*; an army which was no match for his numerous enemy. Consequently, he determined to maintain himself in fortified positions, and protract the war. But the lazyges, who could not endure a siege, dispersed themselves throughout the surrounding country and rendered an engagement inevitable, as the Ligii and Hermunduri had there rushed to the attack<sup>496</sup>.

The second was written by Pliny:

The higher parts between the Danube and the Hercynian Forest as far as the winter quarters of Pannonia at Carnuntum and the plains and level country of the German frontiers there are occupied by the Sarmatian lazyges, while the Dacians whom they have driven out hold the mountains and forests as far as the river Theiss. From the river Maros, or else the Dora if it is that which separates them [the Sarmatians] from the Suebi and the Kingdom of Vannius, the opposite side of the country is occupied by the Basternae and then other German tribes<sup>497</sup>.

Both passages clearly indicate that the lazyges were in the Carpathian Basin before the collapse of Vannius' rule in 50. The question is whether the exact date of their arrival can be established more precisely.

The *argumentum ex silentio* for the earliest possible date is provided by the time of the campaign probably led by Marcus Vinicius. Mócsy argued that the Roman troops crossed the Danube and advanced as far as the northern fringes of the Hungarian Plain in order to avenge the Dacian raid of 10 BC. Knowing that the Romans did not encounter any Sarmatians during their campaign, we may assume that the latter had not arrived in the Carpathian Basin at this time<sup>498</sup>. Obviously, this argument only holds true if it is assumed that the Sarmatians arrived along a southern route leading through the Danube Valley. Accepting this scenario, the Sarmatians' migration can be dated between 10 BC and 50 AD.

Kovács narrowed this time-range further by re-examining Pliny's information:

Here we face no doubt the most problematic passage in Pliny made even more difficult by later interpolations. The text can be split up in several ways, therefore there are various possibilities of interpretation. A. Mócsy could reconstruct the original text, that was followed by several later interpolations: 1. the definition concerning the Dacians: *ad Pathissum amnem*, 2. the definition *a Maro*, 3. the phrase starting with *sive* and mentioning *regnum Vannianum* and its eastern extension. A further difficulty is the personal pronoun *eos* (it could refer to the Sarmatians or the Dacians [or the Bastarnas] and the belonging of the adverb *Maro* (whether it belongs to *confinium*, to the Dacians together with the mention of Tisza or maybe to the last part of sentence). The description of the original border between the Germans and Sarmatians might be at an earlier point in time because of its neighbourhood to the Sarmatians (before the formation of the *regnum Vannianum*) therefore the wandering of Sarmatians to the Carpathian basin can be placed to before 20 AD. Identifying the location of the *regnum Vannianum* on the basis of river names is also problematic. Only the identification of Marus-

<sup>496</sup> Tacit. *Annal.* XII.29-30, italics added for emphasis.

<sup>497</sup> Plin. *NH* IV.XII.80-81: »Superiora autem inter Danuvium et H[er]cynium saltum usque ad Pannonica hiberna Carnunti Germanorumque ibi confinium, campos et plana lazyges Sarmatae, montes vero et saltus pulsi ab iis Daci ad Pathissum amnem

a Maro«; Plin. *NH* IV.XII.81: »sive Duria est a Suebis regnoque Vanniano dirimens eos, aversa Bastarnae tenent aliique Germani.« Cf. Fehér/Kovács 2005a, 50-53. 207-209.

<sup>498</sup> Alföldi 1943a, 12. – Mócsy 1974, 36-37. – Fehér/Kovács 2005a, 208-209.

Morava is certain and the territory of the kingdom of Vannius was thought to be to the east or west of it<sup>499</sup>.

The location of Vannius' kingdom was also described by Tacitus:

The barbarians who followed the two kings [the deposed Marcomannic kings Maroboduus and Catualda], lest they might disturb the peace of the provinces by mingling with the population, were settled beyond the Danube between the rivers Marus and Cusus, under a king, Vannius, of the nation of the Quadi<sup>500</sup>.

There is a contradiction between Pliny's location and that of Tacitus. Pliny asserted that Vannius' kingdom lay between the Marus and the Duria, while Tacitus located it between the Marus and the Cusus. This has been resolved by the reliable identification of the rivers in question. We now know that the Illyrian name Cusus («foaming river») was later translated as Duria by the Celts<sup>501</sup>. What remains to be established is which river was known by this name in Antiquity, and whether the lazyges had indeed advanced as far as the River Morava, where they established contact with Vannius, or whether Germanic groups had occupied any areas east of this line in the region north of the Danube. Both theories had their followers among classical philologists, archaeologists and historians. Archaeologists specialising in the archaeology of the Barbaricum also contributed to the debate. Slovakian research has identified the find assemblages dating to the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century at the latest that can be regarded as the heritage of the Quadi, whose distribution can be demonstrated up to the Váh Valley. However, Fitz's argument that Vannius' kingdom and the boundary of the Quadic lands did not necessarily coincide cannot be lightly discarded. In his view, the real threat to Rome was Maroboduus, against whom Vannius' kingdom was established. He suggested that the River Morava, a more significant waterway, would more likely have been chosen for marking the border in this strategic situation (fig. 143)<sup>502</sup>.

When trying to identify the Sarmatians' settlement territory, it must be recalled that the Roman *ripa Sarmatica* denoted that part of the Danube between Kostolac and Esztergom<sup>503</sup>. However, this implies no more than that there was a period when the border between the Sarmatians and the Germanic peoples lay in the Esztergom area. Whether this situation evolved at the time of the Sarmatians' arrival cannot be established. Pliny's report would suggest that this was not the case; future archaeological research will no doubt provide an answer to this question.

The Sarmatians definitely established themselves in their new homeland before the end of Vannius' reign because we know that the cavalry of the Quadian king was comprised of Sarmatians. Let us examine more closely the period before Vannius' reign. Pliny's passage concerning the Sarmatians' advance as far as Carnuntum probably refers to the period of their arrival. If this is true, then the early Germanic finds identified by Slovakian research<sup>504</sup> provide the *terminus ante quem* for the first appearance of the Sarmatians because the Germanic burials can perhaps date only from the period after the Germanic tribes advancing from the west had driven the Sarmatians to the east. Of course, this idea is convincing only if the lazyges appeared in the vicinity of Carnuntum as other than mercenaries. In this case-scenario, the Sarmatians had to make an

499 Fehér/Kovács 2005a, 40-43, with further literature.

500 Tacit. *Annal.* II.63.

501 See Graf 1936, 34-35, with further literature.

502 Fitz 1961/1962. The number of finds is still low (Sládkovičovo, Abrahám, Kostolná pri Dunaji, all in the Galanta area: Kolník 1977; Dunajská Streda close to Galanta: Varsík/Prohászka

2009, 193-202), although it must also be noted that Sarmatian finds have not been discovered in the region, i. e. on the Little Hungarian Plain up to Carnuntum (Bad Deutsch-Altenburg).

503 Patsch 1937, 133.

504 B1a-B1b, corresponding to the late Augustan and early Tiberian and the late Tiberian-Claudian Age.



**Fig. 143** The possible boundaries of the earliest Sarmatian settlement territory in the Carpathian Basin. – (After Kőhegyi 1982, figs 18-19; map M. Ober, RGZM).

appearance in the Carnuntum area before the creation of Vannius' kingdom and they were forced to retreat behind the River Váh by the new Germanic power.

In 9 BC, the Marcomanni were defeated by Drusus and were dislodged from their former lands. The related Quadi probably moved to Moravia, where they came under the rule of Maraboduus, the Marcomannic king. However, Maraboduus was soon vanquished by Ariminus, leader of the Cherusci. His power declined; he was toppled by his discontented subjects, as was his successor Catualda. Rome created a vassal state on the frontier by settling the followers of the two vanquished leaders on the left bank of the Danube. In 20 AD, the Romans appointed the Quadic Vannius to head the new state<sup>505</sup>. Taking advantage of the political situation and the unrest on the Empire's frontier, the Sarmatians moved into the areas north of the Danube during Maraboduus' time or during Catualda's brief reign. This is all the more possible because there is good reason to believe that the Sarmatians were often invited to fight as mercenaries in distant lands<sup>506</sup> – offers

<sup>505</sup> Alföldi 1939a, 532.

<sup>506</sup> Vaday 1982/1983, 179.

they gladly accepted in the hope of plentiful booty. One case in point is the conduct of the Aorsi and the Siraci in the events of 49 AD (see above); another is Tacitus' remark for the year 69 AD:

These chiefs also offered the service of their people, and its force of cavalry, their only effective troops [i. e. for the Romans]; but the offer was declined, lest in the midst of civil strife they should attempt some hostile enterprise, or, influenced by higher offers from other quarters, should cast off all sense of right and duty<sup>507</sup>.

It is therefore possible that the Sarmatian horsemen serving in Vannius' army were mercenaries. Another noteworthy aspect of Tacitus' quoted passage is his claim that »the princes of the Sarmatian lazyges [...] were enrolled in the army«, i. e. the Roman army, to prevent them from raiding the province. In 69 AD, the Romans thus had precise and reliable information on the Sarmatians, suggesting that they could hardly have been fresh arrivals on the Hungarian Plain.

Returning to Kovács's well-grounded assessment of the literary evidence, he seconded Mócsy's view, according to which Pliny's passage implied that the arrival of the lazyges can be dated well before Vannius' reign, i. e. before 20 AD<sup>508</sup>. Kovács supported Mócsy's hypothesis with one more argument: the province enjoyed a spell of peace during the Tiberian period and Roman rule was firm, indicated also by the fact that L. Munatius Plancus acted as the governor of Pannonia for seventeen years without a break and that the sources were silent about the province for some thirty years<sup>509</sup>.

The arrival of the Sarmatians – or, more precisely, of the lazyges – in the Carpathian Basin before 20 AD, probably sometime between 10 and 20 AD, and their settlement in the areas adjacent to the Quadian lands is supported by other data too. A little after 50 AD, the Pannonian-lazygian neighbourhood is described as a familiar, long-existent situation<sup>510</sup>, as we read in Lucan, for example: »Thank the high gods no eastern hosts are here | To wreak their fury; nor Sarmatian horde | With northern tribes conjoined [...]«

Mócsy suggested that the Dacian-Sarmatian incursion into Moesia in 6 AD could perhaps be linked to the lazygian migration, the implication being that the movement of the Sarmatians toward the west had already begun. Seeing that the Roman forces were tied down by the Pannonian-Dalmatian revolt and that Moesian troops had also been deployed, they had no means of taking any action on the left bank of the Danube<sup>512</sup>. The weakening of the Dacian state enabled migrations to the west during this period.

As we saw above, the appearance of the Sarmatians at the Lower Danube led to major changes in the life of the Dacian state. Although little is known about the relations between the Dacians and the neighbouring Iranian (Scythian/Sarmatian) peoples, there is evidence, no matter how slight, that strong contacts were forged between them, as shown by the Sarmatian artefacts found on Dacian sites (including pieces with tamga marks), the alliance between the two peoples at the time of Trajan's campaign and the use of typical, undeniably ethno-specific Sarmatian artefacts, such as dragon banners, etc<sup>513</sup>. Several coin-dated find assemblages from the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century discovered in Dacian territory contain fragments of armour plates, indicating that the Dacians had adopted the military tactics of the Sarmatian *cataphracti*, who had appeared as enemies in the region. The use of arrows tipped with massive arrowheads made for the large

<sup>507</sup> Tacit. *Hist.* III.5.

<sup>508</sup> Mócsy 1977, 439. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 33. – Fehér/Kovács 2005a, 42. 208-209.

<sup>509</sup> Fehér/Kovács 2005a, 208-209.

<sup>510</sup> Alföldi 1940a, 13. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 33.

<sup>511</sup> Lucan. *b. civ.* (Phars.) III, 93-95: »*Di melius, quod non Latias Eous in oras / nunc furor incubuit nec iuncto Sarmata velox*

*Pannonio Dacisque Getes admixtus*«. This passage was first quoted in this context by Alföldi 1939a, 532. See also Fehér/Kovács 2005a, 174, with further literature.

<sup>512</sup> Mócsy 1974, 39.

<sup>513</sup> Alföldi 1943a, 4, with reference to geographic names and religious beliefs.

Sarmatian bows also reflects Sarmatian influence<sup>514</sup>. The Dacian attacks on the Empire at several locations in 11-12 AD, eventually repelled by Sextus Aelius Catus and Cn. Cornelius Lentulus, can also be attributed to pressure from the Sarmatians<sup>515</sup>.

Accepting this early date for the arrival of the Sarmatians, it must also be borne in mind that the organisation of the province of Pannonia and the creation of the *limes* can roughly be dated to the same period. In this case, the two events must be examined together.

In addition, we have a Late Roman author Aurelius Victor, who mentioned Sarmatian incursions into Pannonia in connection with the events from the time of Tiberius<sup>516</sup>. If we consider this information as authentic<sup>517</sup>, then the early arrival of the Sarmatians gains a further argument.

A brief review of Alföldi's views on the arrival of the lazyges seems in order at this point<sup>518</sup>. He noted that soon after their conquest of Transdanubia, the Romans began the organisation of an effective defence system on the Danubian frontier against the Dacians, who at the time also controlled the Hungarian Plain. Alföldi believed that Augustus' original vision was an imperial frontier along the Carpathians. His plans were shattered by the Pannonian rebellion in 6 AD and by the annihilation of Quintilius Varus' legion at Teutoburg in 9 AD. His sensible plans were discarded by his successors, who instead followed the »patriarch's« unwise retreat, with the single exception of Marcus Aurelius. Instead of exploiting the natural protection offered by the Carpathian range, Augustus' successors elected to create a long, barely defensible frontier<sup>519</sup>. The Dacian threat increased during Tiberius' reign:

The Romans attempted to make the largely ineffective, angular Transdanubian frontier inaccessible by other means, by allowing the Sarmatian lazyges to settle in the Danube-Tisza interfluvium (probably under Tiberius) [...]<sup>520</sup>.

A Suebian buffer state was established to hold off the Quadi and the Marcomanni simultaneously:

Tiberius' idea was to create buffer states in order to isolate the Dacians from the Germanic peoples (specifically from the Suebians, with whom they had a common border along the River Morava), as well as from the Danubian frontier. Cutting off the Dacians by settling a population which was wholly alien to both the Dacians and the Germanic peoples seemed a viable solution. This is why the Sarmatians from the Danube Delta region were settled in their new lands by Drusus, son of Tiberius<sup>521</sup>.

Alföldi does not cite any hard evidence to support his claim, he merely mentions that Vannius' kingdom was a similar vassal state.

Alföldi, no doubt, had Marcus Vinicius' campaign in mind when he wrote of the Dacians being pushed back in the wake of military operations. This event would have provided the opportunity to settle the lazyges after a passage through Dacian lands<sup>522</sup> because it seems most unlikely that the Dacians would have willingly allowed a part of their territory to be settled by another people, even if they were on good terms, at least judging from the sources. Vinicius' campaign in 13 BC can be seen as one of the stages in organising

514 Beldiman 1989. – Prohnenko 2001.

515 Vékony 1989, 77-79. – Nemeth 2005, 123-124, for a more recent overview with the earlier literature.

516 Aurelius Victor II.9.

517 Fehér/Kovács 2005a, 165.

518 Alföldi 1936, 15; 1943a, 14.

519 Alföldi 1943a, 13.

520 Alföldi 1936, 15.

521 Alföldi 1940a, 13.

522 See the section »The Neighbouring Barbarian Peoples: Dacians, Celts and Germans« below.

the re-settlement. In Alföldi's opinion, Vinicius crossed the Danube following the Dacian incursion and annihilated a Dacian army and their Bastarnian allies in Wallachia, then moved on to defeat the north-western Dacian tribes and to curb smaller Illyrian and Celtic groups between the Upper Tisza region and the Danube Bend<sup>523</sup>. This was the single campaign affecting the region that can be interpreted as clearing the way for the settlement of a new people.

Alföldi thus argued that the Romans had planned to install a »buffer state« against the Dacians for political reasons and that they had engineered, or allowed, the settlement of the Sarmatians from the Lower Danube on the Hungarian Plain. In this scenario, their settlement territory extended from the Olt through the Banat and the Danube-Tisza interfluvium to the Little Hungarian Plain as far as Carnuntum. Encouraged by the Romans, the Roxolani joined the lazyges up to the Olt. In this way, the Dacians would have been isolated from the Danube. However, the archaeological record does not support this theory, as shall be shown below. Considerably more Roman imports have been found in the Quadic lands than among the Sarmatians, which in itself calls for caution.

Alföldi's buffer state theory gained wide currency. Mócsy, who accepted this hypothesis, had earlier linked the lazyges' arrival to Drusus' operations in Illyricum between 17 and 20 AD, suggesting that the lazyges had settled in the Carpathian Basin following his activities and acted as the buffer state between the Dacians and the Roman Empire envisioned by Alföldi, thereby shortening the Roman-Dacian frontier. Mócsy regarded the construction of the stone camp at Aquincum, dated to this period, as proof of the re-settlement. However, it has since been conclusively established that the cornerstone of this hypothesis, the so-called Drusus Inscription, should in fact be associated with Vespasian<sup>524</sup>.

Accepting the early arrival of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin in itself challenges any theories of a Roman buffer state or zone because the organisation of the province took place at this time<sup>525</sup>. The low number of Roman artefacts in the early Sarmatian assemblages also belies this assumption<sup>526</sup>.

Vaday challenged this model of intentional Roman settlement. She brought up four arguments against it<sup>527</sup>:

- (1) The lazyges arrived on the Hungarian Plain at the very time when centralised Dacian power disintegrated, the implication being that the Romans hardly had any serious need for a buffer state. This argument is weak because we know that the Dacian question was one of the unresolved issues on the Roman political agenda since Augustus. The fact that the Dacian state was weaker or stronger during one or another period was hardly a criterion in Roman foreign policy.
- (2) The re-settlement was not mentioned in the written sources and it seems unlikely that such a large-scale event would have escaped the notice of all writers. The problem with this *argumentum ex silentio* is that the Sarmatians' arrival and settlement is barely reported in the sources at all despite the fact that it had a major impact on the region's history. As a matter of fact, the repulsion of the Dacians, one of Rome's most powerful enemies, is only mentioned by Pliny. One might say that while the event should have been mentioned, the lack of any reports can hardly be regarded as conclusive evidence.
- (3) On Ptolemy's map, the lazyges of the Hungarian Plain are given a curious adjective: *metanastae* (»transplanted«) (fig. 144). In Vaday's opinion, this referred not to a re-settlement by the Romans, but to the distinction between the lazyges who had remained in the Lower Danube region and their kinsmen who had occupied the Hungarian Plain<sup>528</sup>. It must here be recalled that Alföldi had never claimed that the entire population had been re-settled, he merely noted that the lazyges (or a part of them) had been

523 Alföldi 1943a, 12.

524 Mócsy 1977, 439. – Tóth/Vékony 1970a; 1970b.

525 Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 31-35.

526 See also Vaday 1990/1991, 75.

527 Vaday 1990/1991, 75.

528 This possibility was first suggested by Mommsen 1917, 197, and has since become widely accepted. According to Hind 2007, 243-244, the word *metanastes* simply meant »nomadic«, corresponding to the Latin *turba* (»troop«, »band«), and thus simply denoted a »wandering band«.



Fig. 144 Detail of Ptolemy's ninth map page of Europe. – (After Ptolem. *Nona europe tabula*).

re-settled. This was a reasonable assumption because the Romans are known to have re-settled various population groups, even if this re-settlement generally meant a relocation to the Empire rather than from one place to another in the Barbaricum. Not to speak of the fact that Alföldi drew the boundary of the lazygian lands at the Olt, where they neighbored on the Roxolani, again implying that the immigrants did not represent the entire lazygian tribe.

- (4) Reports of the events of 68-69 AD state that the Quadi were ruled by kings, while the lazyges only had »chiefs«<sup>529</sup>, which in Vaday's view meant that the lazygian king and his court still resided in the east. However, only a minute examination of the usage of the terms »king«, »chiefs«, »leading men« and the like in the period's sources can establish whether this reasoning can be accepted as a convincing

<sup>529</sup> Tacit. *Hist.* III.5. The events in question and the sources will be discussed in the next chapter.

argument. A detailed analysis of Sarmatian society is likewise sorely needed; suffice it here to recall the sceptre-bearers described as the leaders of Sarmatian society in the Protogenes Decree and Tacitus' report on the Caucasian campaign in 35 AD. In other words, the expressions used for denoting leaders were either not consistent or changed with time. In truth, we know very little about Sarmatian social hierarchy, and neither do we know to what extent the Romans restructured the social fabric of a people transplanted from beyond the Empire's borders. On the other hand, the argument that only a part of the people migrated is not relevant with regard to re-settlement.

In sum, we may say that Alföldi did not present convincing arguments for supporting the buffer state theory. Although this theory seems less credible to us, it cannot be conclusively rejected for the time being.

While the exact date of the Sarmatians' arrival cannot be unequivocally determined from the literary sources, a date around 20 AD seems to be the most likely. It must be borne in mind, however, that the theories reviewed above all assume a migration from the south as the single possible route. The early Sarmatian finds show a coherent distribution in the Danube-Tisza interfluvium, from the Eger area to the Bácska/Bačka region, with a definite concentration in the north. In the light of the large-scale excavations across Hungary during the past few decades, this can hardly be regarded as mere chance or as resulting from the imbalances of research. This distribution is by all means noteworthy.

Following Daicoviciu, Romanian researchers favour a migration from the north, the main argument being that, with the exception of the Gyulavarsánd (Vârşand) site, none of the find assemblages from western Romania can be dated before the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The distribution of cremation burials indicates that this territory was under Dacian control in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>530</sup>. A recently published Sarmatian find attributed to the first lazygian wave, found in Sânnicolau Mare, is new evidence against the northern migration theory<sup>531</sup>.

The rare parallels to the early Sarmatian material from the Hungarian Plain, and especially to the golden dress ornaments, come from the Lower Danube Valley and the Dniester-Prut interfluvium. The distribution of the finds in the foreland of the Carpathian Basin suggests that the migration could have taken both a northern and southern route<sup>532</sup>.

## The Archaeological Evidence

*Es scheint zweckmässig, vorerst das archäologische Bild des Gebietes zu zeichnen, d.h. die verschiedenen und absolute Chronologie derselben festzustellen. Erst auf Grund dieser Vorarbeiten können die Mitteilungen der gleichzeitigen Schriftsteller herangezogen werden*<sup>533</sup>.

Several attempts have been made to identify and map the earliest Sarmatian finds in the Carpathian Basin. Párducz, the father of Sarmatian studies in Hungary, was the first to distinguish the Sarmatian elements of the so-called first Pontic-Germanic assemblages as defined by Beninger<sup>534</sup>. While Párducz correctly perceived that this could only be accomplished through a systematic comparative analysis of the steppe find material, he examined the find assemblages of the territories east of the Carpathian Basin without setting any regional or chronological restrictions. He examined the metalwork of the Scythians-Sarmatians

<sup>530</sup> For a good summary, see Dörner 1971, 688-690.

<sup>531</sup> Bejan/Măruia/Tănase 2011.

<sup>532</sup> From his analysis of the literary evidence, Harmatta 1949, 134, also argued for a migration from the Lower Danube region. One problem in this respect is that the Roman sources under-

standably focused on events in the Lower Danube region and are silent on the more remote northern territories.

<sup>533</sup> Párducz 1941a, 44.

<sup>534</sup> Párducz 1935.

and the Greek towns of the northern Pontic from an almost purely art historical perspective. The lack of a finer chronology left its mark on the classification of the material from the Carpathian Basin: for example, finds ranging from the Tiszatarján assemblage<sup>535</sup> to the Herpály shield boss dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD and the helmet from Budapest, Eskü Square assigned to the late Roman period, were lumped together and discussed. The assemblage from Szentés-Nagyhegy, which has since been shown to date from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>536</sup>, was also classified as part of this group of finds. Párducz discussed 15 assemblages in his study, which he assigned to the same category, the so-called Pontic Sarmatian finds, principally on stylistic grounds, and dated most of them into the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. He did not initially attempt a finer chronological distinction between the finds<sup>537</sup>.

The first volume of Párducz's survey of Sarmatian artefacts published in 1941 did not offer more precise chronological distinctions. Párducz treated the assemblages from the arrival of the Sarmatians to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century as part of a single find horizon<sup>538</sup>.

The first attempt to chronologically fine-tune the artefactual material spanning two centuries was published in 1956, when Párducz distinguished the so-called Szentés-Nagyhegy group, which he defined as the heritage of the new population arriving at the time of the Marcomannic Wars. He separated this group from the assemblages of the earliest horizon<sup>539</sup>.

Returning to the earliest finds, Párducz's pioneering work was continued by Kóhegyi, who also reviewed the period's known find assemblages. It is unclear from his early studies in this field<sup>540</sup> how many successive waves of Sarmatian immigration he had assumed: it would appear that he distinguished three waves. He can be credited with systematically collecting the grave inventories containing gold artefacts (ten sites in all) as part of his publication of the Kelebia assemblage. Kóhegyi noted that the earliest Sarmatian settlement territory lay in the Danube-Tisza interfluvium and that this territory was smaller than the one reconstructed by Párducz<sup>541</sup>. At the same time, he accepted Párducz's idea that the gold finds had been manufactured in one or more Pontic workshops.

Kóhegyi chose this »gold horizon« as the subject of his doctoral thesis, whose main findings were published in 1985<sup>542</sup>, together with a list of the sites and finds of the early archaeological horizon, which he divided into two groups, an earlier and a later one. The former lasted until the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the latter from the turn of the century to the Marcomannic Wars. He only assigned six of the 15 sites listed by Párducz in 1935 to the early horizon, which comprised 31 assemblages, while the late one was made up of eleven assemblages.

Although Kóhegyi separated the sites of his two groups, the rationale of his categorisation remained unclear. What can be gleaned from his scattered remarks is that gold earrings, lunulas, beads, dress ornaments (flitters of golden foil) and carnelian beads occur in both groups. At the same time, torcs and mirrors are lacking from the earlier group, while the later group is hallmarked by the disappearance of Celtic finds. The boundary between the two groups is blurred and thus the classification of smaller assemblages is open to question, their chronology is uncertain, the latter being especially true of stray finds which still account for the greater part of the material. One major merit of Kóhegyi's study is a detailed discussion of the steppe and Pontic analogies. Vaday likewise attempted to distinguish two groups in her study discussing the burials uncovered at Mezőcsát-Hörcsögös<sup>543</sup>. In her view, the jewellery sets brought from the Pontic were gradually »diluted«, a process which can be accurately dated because the earliest find assemblages contain »pure« jewellery

<sup>535</sup> In our view, this assemblage should rather be attributed to the Scythians.

<sup>536</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1998, 197-198.

<sup>537</sup> Párducz 1935, 112-113.

<sup>538</sup> Párducz 1941a.

<sup>539</sup> Párducz 1956.

<sup>540</sup> Kóhegyi 1973; 1974-1975.

<sup>541</sup> Párducz 1956, fig. 3.

<sup>542</sup> Kóhegyi 1982.

<sup>543</sup> Vaday 1982/1983.



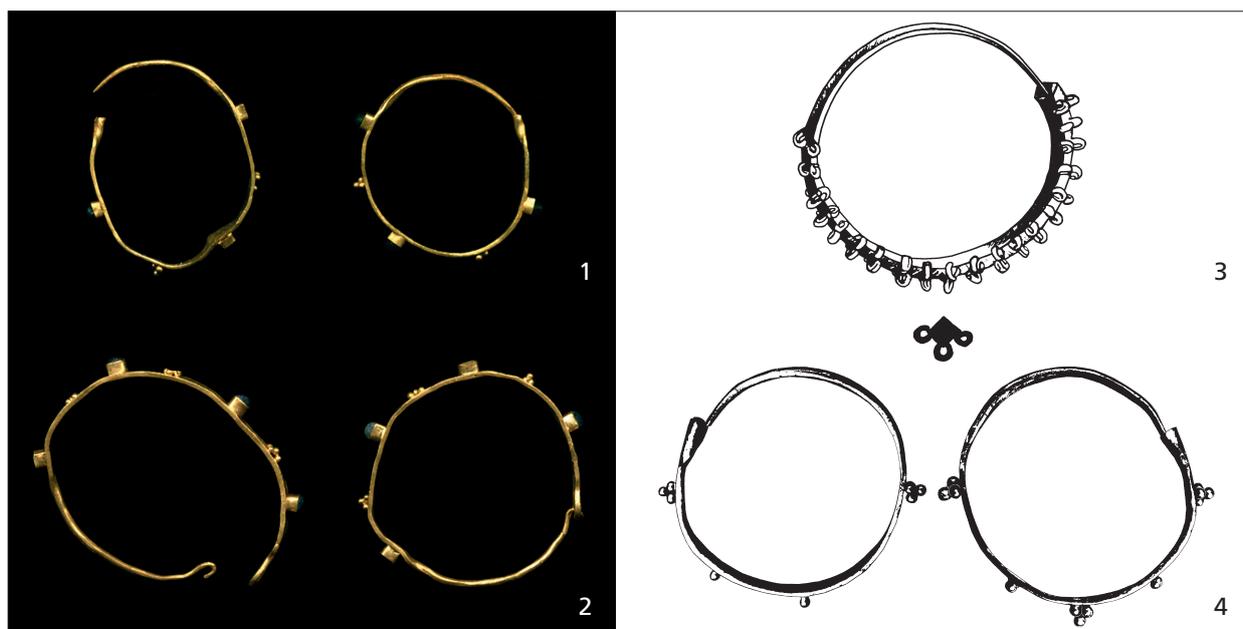
**Fig. 145** Selection of the typical finds of the »golden horizon« representing the heritage of the earliest Sarmatian groups in the Hungarian Plain: torc and carnelian beads from Nyíregyháza-Felsősimá (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished), earring, gold beads, dress ornaments from Füzesabony-Kastélydűlő and lunula from Tenk-Homokbánya. – (Photos E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

sets, while the later ones become gradually »diluted«<sup>544</sup>. However, this classification is subjective, to say the least, and can hardly be applied in the case of the stray finds.

Luckily for research, a fairly large grave group of seven burials was uncovered relatively recently on the outskirts of Füzesabony, whose grave assemblages were published with exemplary speed by the excavator<sup>545</sup>. Following the above brief overview of previous research, let us now see what we know about the earliest Sarmatian (lazygian) finds of the Carpathian Basin (**fig. 145**). Undoubtedly, the most characteristic pieces of this horizon are gold jewellery: earrings, pendants, beads and dress ornaments adorned with granulation or pseudo-granulation, and cabochons with blue or blackish-blue glass inlay. Párducz's assertion that these gold finds originated from the Pontic has become widely accepted<sup>546</sup>. Vaday claimed that these items did not reach Hungary through trade, but were brought here by the first immigrants because otherwise there would have been a continuous supply of this jewellery type to replace the buried, lost or damaged pieces<sup>547</sup>.

<sup>544</sup> Vaday 1982/1983, 168. 180; 1989b, 56.  
<sup>545</sup> Farkas 2000b.

<sup>546</sup> Párducz 1935.  
<sup>547</sup> Vaday 1982/1983, 174.



**Fig. 146** Early gold earrings: **1-2** earrings decorated with granulation and cabochon inlay from Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő, Graves 60 and 150 (photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár). – **3** earrings with wire decoration from the Eger region (after Kóhegyi 1982, pl. II, 2-3). – **4** earrings with granulation from Kelebia-Vermesjárás (after Wicker 2011, 94).

Interestingly enough, it has proved virtually impossible to identify a single territory and a specific period for the antecedents of the finds from the Carpathian Basin. Let us first examine the different jewellery types and their origins.

## Earrings

Large gold earrings can be regarded as one of the type finds of the early find horizon (figs 146-147). Their most typical trait is their fastening mechanism: one end of the hoop is pointed and can be slipped into the other trumpet-shaped hollow end (fig. 146, 1. 3-4). Another fastening mechanism of the hook-and-eye type was also employed: one end was hammered flat and perforated, the other end was fashioned into a hook for insertion. One pair of earrings from Békéscsaba and Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő (fig. 146, 2) can be assigned to this type<sup>548</sup>.

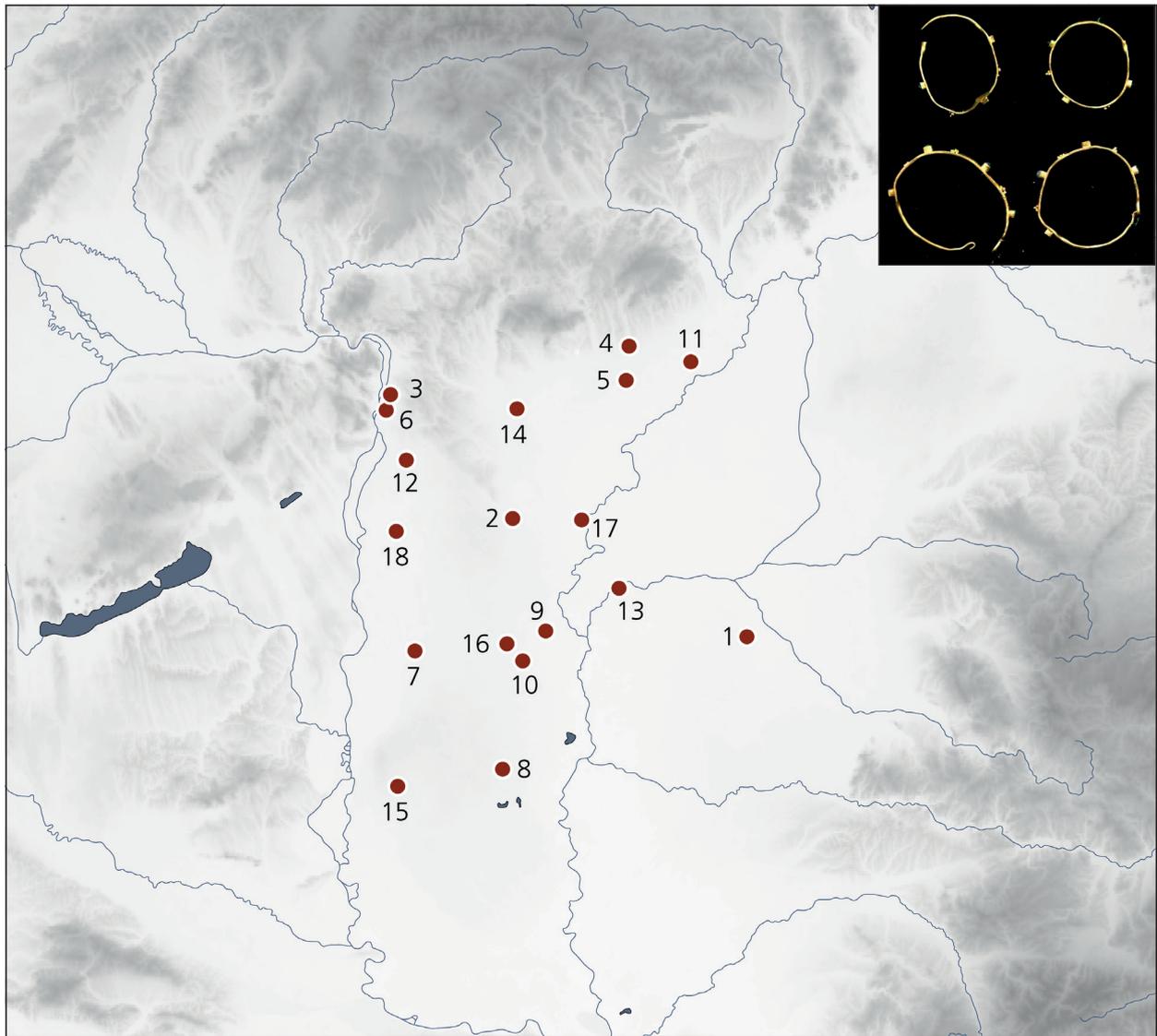
Regarding ornamentation, three types can be distinguished: 1) wire decoration; 2) granulation; and, 3) granulation and cabochon glass inlay. Kóhegyi believed that there was no chronological difference between the three types of ornamentation<sup>549</sup>. The cabochon pieces were, without exception, inlaid with blue or black (or bluish-black) glass.

These earrings can be found across the entire Danube-Tisza interfluvium, from Eger to the northern Bácska. Comparable pieces are known from Békéscsaba and Öcsöd, east of the Tisza<sup>550</sup>. Earrings decorated with granulation or a combination of granulation and cabochons have no counterparts, either in the eastern Sarmatian lands, or in the northern Pontic towns. The single comparable piece decorated with granulation

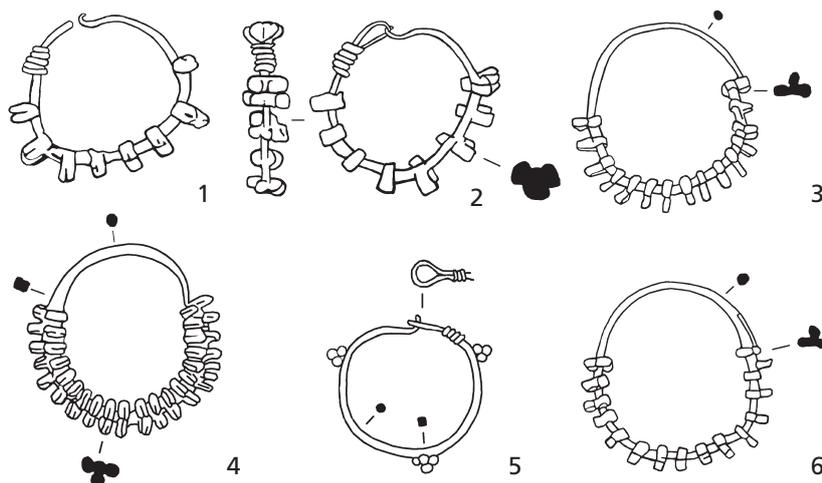
<sup>548</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 268. – Farkas 2000b, 15 figs. 10, 1-2.

<sup>549</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 330.

<sup>550</sup> Vaday 1989b, 45. 260-261 cat. no. 225, added the Öcsöd site to Kóhegyi's list.



**Fig. 147** Distribution of the early gold earrings of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin: **1** Békéscsaba-Ószőlők (after Kóhegyi 1982, 268 pl. I, 13-14). – **2** Cegléd area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 270 pl. I, 15). – **3** Dunakeszi-Székes-dűlő (after Korom/Reményi 2004, 209). – **4** Eger area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 271 pl. II, 2-3). – **5** Füzesabony-Kastély dűlő, Graves 60 and 150 (after Farkas 2000b, 15. 17 figs 10, 1-2; 12, 1-2). – **6** Káposztásmegyer (Budapest) (after Kóhegyi 1982, 307 pl. IX, 1-2). – **7** Kecel-Csukástó (after Kóhegyi 1982, 278 pl. III, 8-9). – **8** Kelebia-Vermesjárás (after Kóhegyi 1982, 279. 281 pl. IV, 1-4, two assemblages). – **9** Kiskunfélegyháza-Kecskeméti út (after Kóhegyi 1982, 286-288 pl. VI, 11). – **10** Kiskunmajsa-Kuklás Jenő földje (after Kóhegyi 1982, 290 pl. VI, 18). – **11** Mezőcsát-Kintelen szőlők (after Kóhegyi 1982, 292 pl. VI, 20-21). – **12** Monor area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 294 pl. VII, 1-2). – **13** Öcsöd-Bábocka (after Vaday 1989b, 45. 260-261 pl. 87, 11). – **14** Pusztamonostor-Útépités (after Kóhegyi 1982, 297). – **15** Regőcze-Idina (Ridica) (after Kóhegyi 1982, 299). – **16** Szank-Móricgát (after Kóhegyi 1982, 326 pl. XIV, 1-2). – **17** Szolnok-Szőlősi halom (after Kóhegyi 1982, 300 pl. VII, 20; Vaday 1989b, 45. 271 pl. 4, 2). – **18** Tatárszentgyörgy (after Kóhegyi 1982, 301 pl. VII, 26).



**Fig. 148** Earrings with granulation and wire decoration of the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries from Late Scythian assemblages of the Crimea. – (After Puzdrovskij 2007, fig. 126, 13-16).

is known from Zavetnoe in the Crimea (**fig. 148, 5**), recovered from a burial dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>551</sup>. At the same time, these earrings were one of the most popular jewellery items among the early Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain.

The variant with wire decoration is much rarer among the early gold earrings (Eger area, Káposztásmegyer, Kecel-Csukástó and a few unprovenanced pieces). This variant has a few parallels in the east, most of which come from 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century Late Scythian cemeteries in the Crimea: Zavetnoe (**fig. 148**)<sup>552</sup>; Bel'bek IV<sup>553</sup>; Ust'-Alma (**fig. 86**)<sup>554</sup>; also from Sarmatian sites, such as Vinogradnyj (region of Rostov) (**fig. 149**)<sup>555</sup>; and from the richly furnished Mihajlovka grave near Odessa (**fig. 150**)<sup>556</sup>.

#### Lunulas

Horseshoe or crescent-shaped pendants (lunulas) represent another typical jewellery type of this period (**figs 151-152**). These pieces show an astonishing variety regarding their form and decoration, most being singular items. Most are decorated with cabochon inlay. Similar to the earrings, the cabochon is generally described as blue, bluish-black and, in a few cases, as black in colour, and usually defined as glass, although none have been archaeometrically examined. The blue and blackish cabochon glass and the granulation suggest that the earrings and these pendants can be derived from the same territory, meaning that we should search for an area where both earrings and lunulas resembling the pieces from the Carpathian Basin are known. This is no easy task: analogies to the earrings can barely be cited.

Countless parallels can be quoted for crescent pendants in general<sup>557</sup>. This form was widely popular in Hellenistic jewellery, although comparable pieces were worn in earlier and later periods, too. However, finds resembling the typical Hungarian pieces with a cabochon stone or glass inlay are few and far between. Kóhegyi knew of a single, similar piece from Rimnicelu in Wallachia, noting that this piece was dated on the strength of the similar pendants from Hungary<sup>558</sup>.

<sup>551</sup> Bogdanova 1989, 40-41 pl. XII, 3.

<sup>552</sup> Bogdanova 1989, 41 fig. 12, 4.

<sup>553</sup> Guščina 1982, 23.

<sup>554</sup> Loboda/Puzdrovskij/Zajcev 2002, fig. 9, 8. – Puzdrovskij 2007, colour tables 1, 8; 5, 1 figs 114, 8; 119, 6; 126, 13-15.

<sup>555</sup> L'Or 2001, 144-145 no. 135.

<sup>556</sup> Dzigovskij 1993, 74-75 fig. 43, 6.

<sup>557</sup> See Vaday 1982/1983, 173-174.

<sup>558</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 332.



**Fig. 149** Find assemblage dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC-1<sup>st</sup> century AD from Vinogradnyj in the Rostov area. – (After L'Or 2001, 144-145 no. 135).



**Fig. 150** Selection of finds, amongst them a gold earring with wire decoration, from the 1<sup>st</sup> century lavish burial found at Mihajlovka near Odessa. – (After Dzigovskij 1993, fig. 43; Skarby 2006, nos 17. 19-20. 22-23).

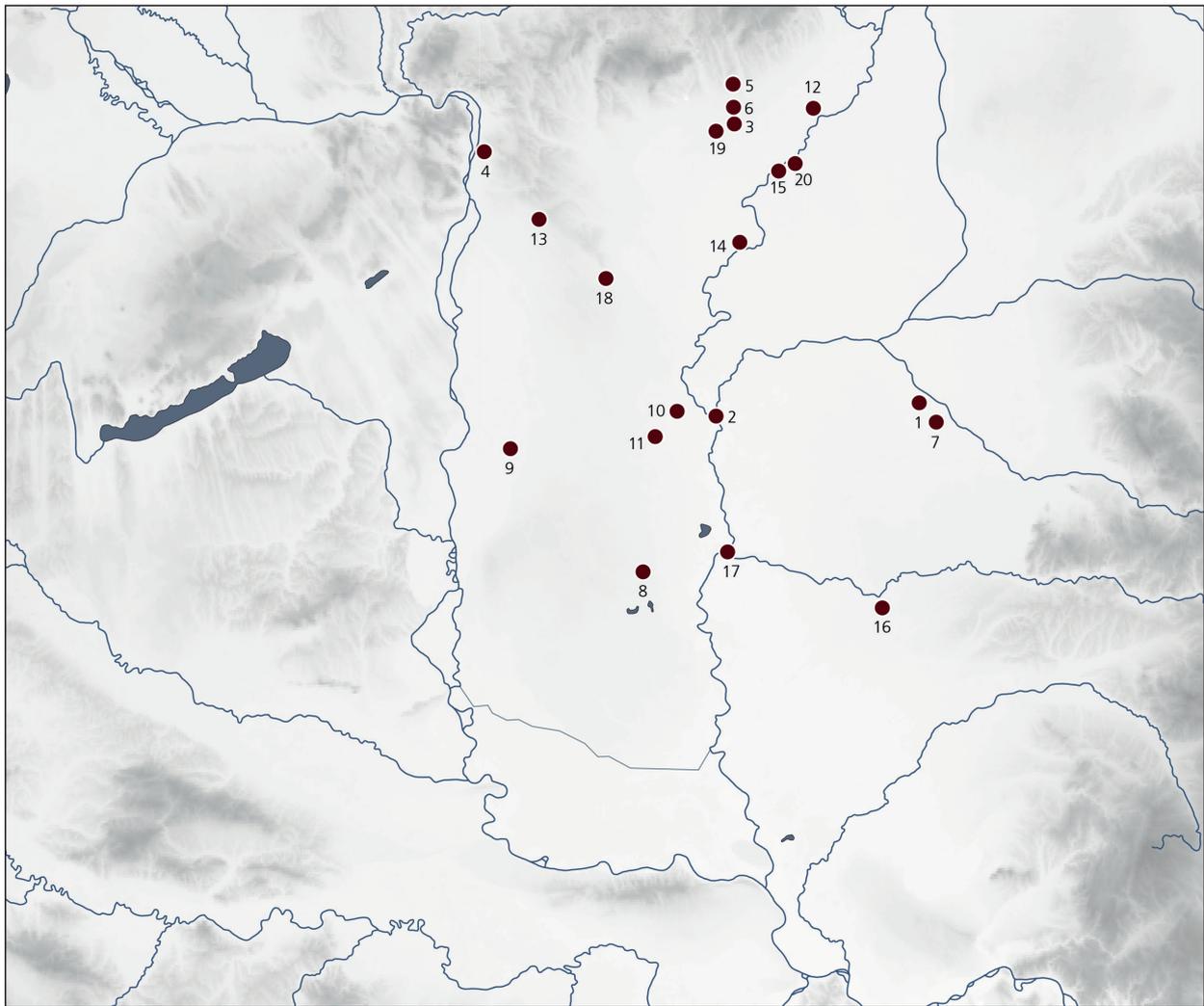


**Fig. 151** Early Sarmatian gold lunulas from the Carpathian Basin: **1** Tenk-Homokbánya. – **2** Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő, Grave 150. – **3** Sănnicolau Mare, Grave 7/2005. – **4** Nyíregyháza-Felsősimá, Grave 71 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished). – (1-2. 4 photos E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár; 3 after Bejan/Măruia/Tănașe 2011, pl. III, 1).

Additional analogies are scarce, and the few known pieces are scattered over an extensive area. Comparable pendants dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD have been published from the Don-Volga interfluvium, the Lower Volga region and the Kuban region<sup>559</sup>. Typically enough, the Hungarian pieces are quoted as parallels in one case<sup>560</sup>.

<sup>559</sup> Sergackov 1998, with further literature.

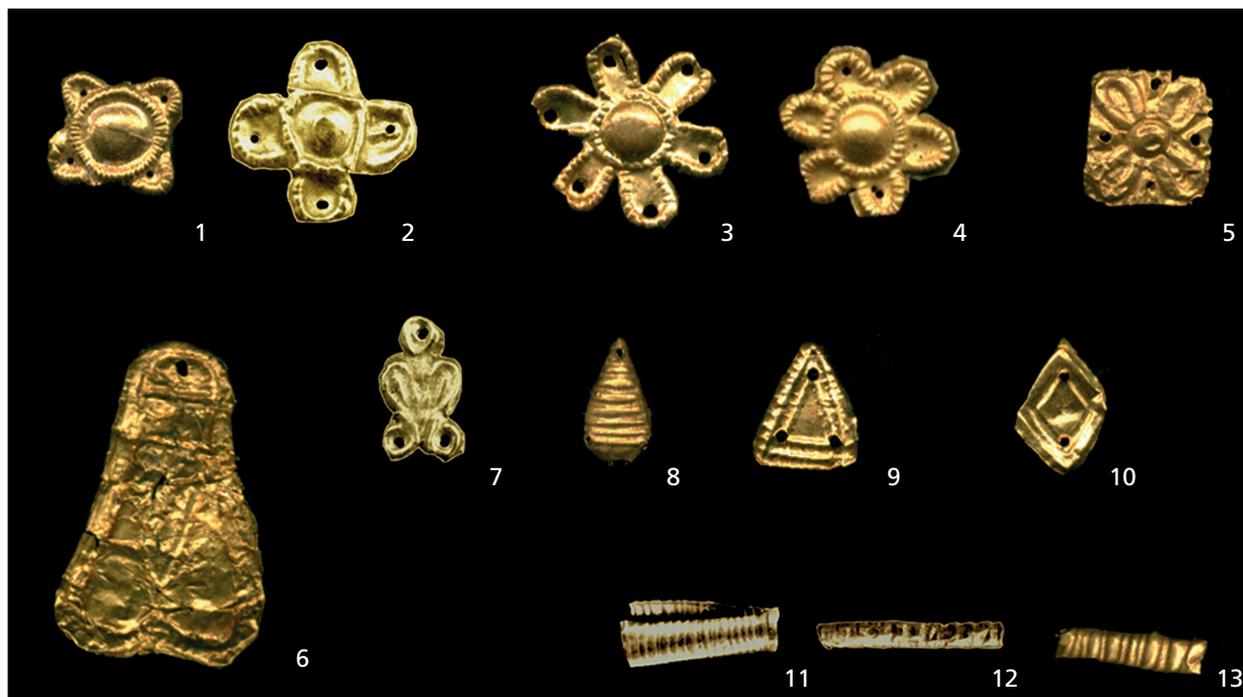
<sup>560</sup> Sergackov 1998, 156.



**Fig. 152** Distribution of early Sarmatian gold lunulas in the Carpathian Basin: **1** Békéscsaba area (after Párducz 1941a, 59 pl. X, 9). – **2** Csongrád and Szentes area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 271 pl. I, 18). – **3** Dormánd-Zsidó temető (Jewish cemetery) (exhibited at temporary exhibition »The rescued heritage – Treasures from the heart of Europe«, Budapest, Parliament, 2012). – **4** Dunakeszi-Székes-dűlő (after Korom/Reményi 2004, 209). – **5** Eger area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 271 pl. II, 1). – **6** Füzesabony-Kastély dűlő, Grave 150 (after Farkas 2000b, 17 fig. 13, 3). – **7** Gyulavarsánd (Várşand)-Laposhalom (after Kóhegyi 1982, 274 pl. II, 49). – **8** Kelebia-Vermesjárás, two pieces (after Kóhegyi 1982, 279. 284 pl. IV, 11-13). – **9** Kiskőrös-Vágóhídi-dűlő-Seregélyes, Graves 7 and 17 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 314 pl. X, 5. 11). – **10** Kiskunfélegyháza-Kecskeméti út, two pieces (after Kóhegyi 1982, 286 pl. VI, 1-2). – **11** Kiskunmajsa-Kuklás Jenő földje (after Kóhegyi 1982, 290 pl. VI, 19). – **12** Mezőcsát-Hörcsögös, Grave 56 (after Vaday 1982/1983, 169 pls 3, 2; 4, 1; 5, 1). – **13** Monor area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 294 pl. VII, 3). – **14** Nagykőrű-Marsó tanya (after Kóhegyi 1982, 295). – **15** Örvény-Seres szőlő (after Kóhegyi 1982, 296 pl. VII, 18). – **16** Sännicolau Mare, Grave 7/2005 (after Bejan/Măruia/Tănase 2011, 166 pl. III, 1). – **17** Szeged-Csongrádi út, Grave 24 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 321 pl. XII, 5). – **18** Tápiószéle-Szumrák (after Kóhegyi 1982, 301). – **19** Tenk-Homokbánya (after Kóhegyi 1982, 303 pl. VIII, 1). – **20** Tiszafüred (after Vaday 1989b, 274 no. 330). – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

A recent find must also be mentioned. This pendant was brought to light at Nyíregyháza-Felsősim (Site 161, Grave 71) in 2005 during the salvage excavations necessitated by the construction of the M3 Motorway. The ribbed suspension loop and the granulation of the pendant compare well with the pieces described above, however, a polyhedral carnelian bead was slipped over the touching ends (fig. 151, 3). The other finds from the cemetery suggest a date in the early horizon<sup>561</sup>.

<sup>561</sup> Unpublished finds in the Jósza András Museum, Nyíregyháza. Istvánovits's excavation.



**Fig. 153** Gold dress ornament types of the early Sarmatian period in the Carpathian Basin. – **1. 3-4. 8-11** Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő, Grave 60. – **2. 7. 12** Kelebia. – **5** Tenk-Homokbánya. – **6** Átány. – **13** Tarnaméra-Urak dűlője. – (2. 7. 12 after Wicker 2011, 94; 1. 3-6. 8-11. 13 photos E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

#### Dress Ornaments (Flitters)

Golden dress ornaments of sheet gold can be regarded as one of the typical finds of the early Sarmatian burials with gold jewellery of the Carpathian Basin. Dress ornaments come in many shapes, most being triangular and four or six petalled rosettes (fig. 153).

Ever since Párducz's study it has been a commonplace of Sarmatian studies that the dress ornaments and the associated gold jewellery had arrived in the Carpathian Basin from the Pontic. As we have already mentioned, Vaday emphasised that these items had been brought here by the first immigrant groups<sup>562</sup>.

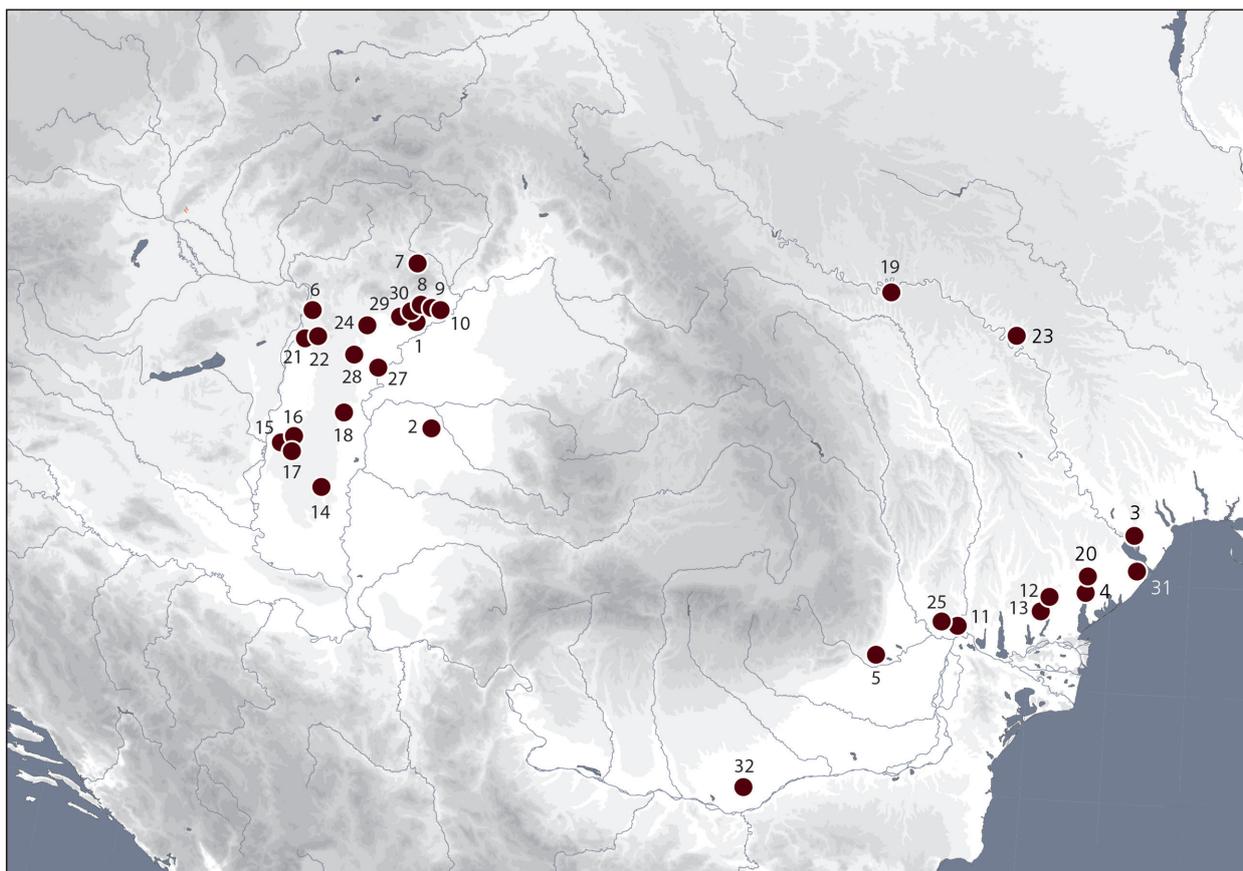
The distribution of assemblages containing gold dress-ornaments from the territories neighbouring on the Carpathian Basin was mapped by the Romanian scholar Babeş<sup>563</sup>. A few new sites such as Beljaevka and Turlaki<sup>564</sup>, both yielding early assemblages from the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century (fig. 154), can now be added to his list of sites. However, Babeş's distribution map does not answer the question of whether the earliest Sarmatian groups arrived from the south via the Danube Valley, or from the north via the Carpathian passes. The distribution map indicates that burials with gold dress-ornaments roughly contemporaneous with the graves in the Hungarian Plain have been brought to light both in the Lower Danube region and in the eastern Carpathian region. The distribution of one of the most typical artefact types of the early horizon thus indicates that both potential migration routes can be considered.

In Sarmatian contexts, golden dress-ornaments (principally lozenge shaped pieces) sewn onto clothing made their appearance in the Prohorovka culture, i. e. in the 4<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC, although their most widespread use was around the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. Unlike earrings and crescent pendants, which have

<sup>562</sup> Párducz 1935. – Vaday 1982/1983, 174. All researchers obviously had the northern Pontic in mind.

<sup>563</sup> Babeş 1999, fig. 12.

<sup>564</sup> Grosu 1990, 38-42.



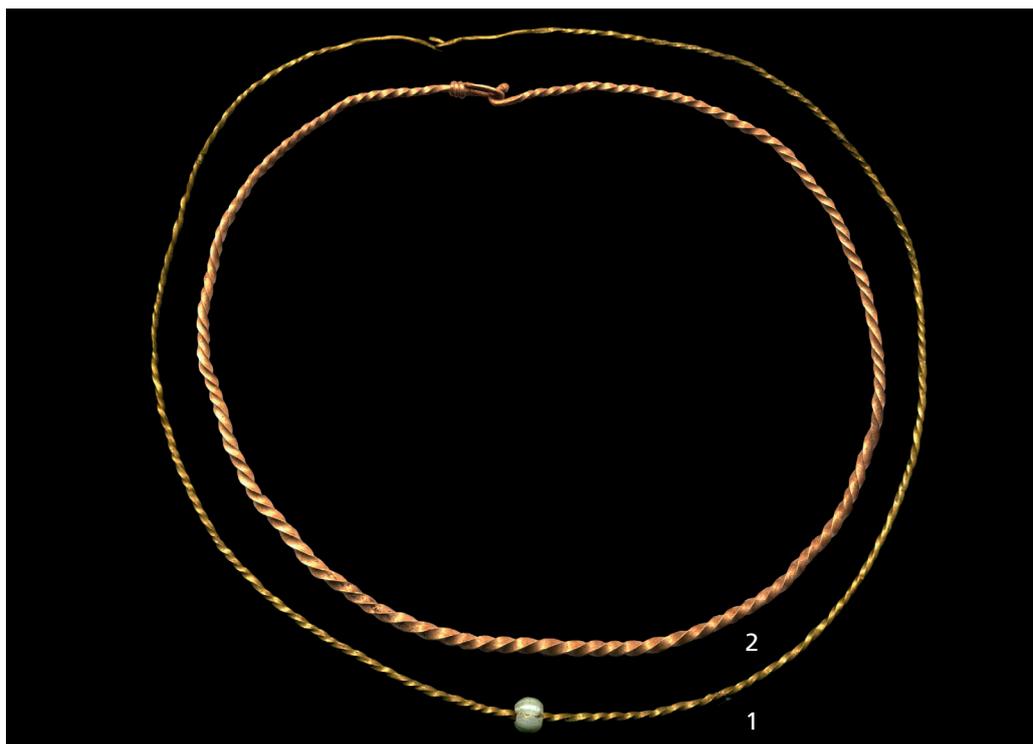
**Fig. 154** Find assemblages with gold dress ornaments of the 1<sup>st</sup> century in the Carpathian Basin and neighbouring regions (Sites 4-5. 11. 19-20. 23. 25. 32: after Babeş 1999, fig. 12): **1** Átány (after Párducz 1941a, 56 pl. XXIX, 54-55. 57-59). – **2** Békéscsaba-Ószőlők (after Kóhegyi 1982, 270 pl. I, 6-10). – **3** Beljajevka (after Grosu 1990, 38-42). – **4** Beloles'e. – **5** Buzău area. – **6** Dunakeszi-Székes-dűlő (after Korom/Reményi 2004, 209). – **7** Eger area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 271 pl. II, 4-14. 20-47). – **8** Füzesabony-Kastély dűlő, Grave 60 (after Farkas 2000b, 15-16 fig. 10, 3-4). – **9** Füzesabony-Kettőshalom, Grave 1 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 305 pl. VIII, 9-14). – **10** Füzesabony-Kettőshalom, Grave 3 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 305 pl. VIII, 16-17). – **11** Galați. – **12** Holmskoe, Grave 22 (after Grosu 1990, 38-42). – **13** Holmskoe, Grave 24 (after Grosu 1990, 38-42). – **14** Kelebia-Vermesjárás (after Kóhegyi 1982, 279. 284 pl. IV, 13-23). – **15** Kiskörös-Vágóhídi dűlő-Seregélyes, Grave 3 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 312 pl. X, 1-4). – **16** Kiskörös-Vágóhídi dűlő-Seregélyes, Grave 16 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 314 pl. X, 9). – **17** Kiskörös-Vágóhídi dűlő-Seregélyes, Grave 18 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 314 pl. X, 12-14. 16-18. 20. 23). – **18** Kiskunfélegyháza-Kecskeméti út (after Kóhegyi 1982, 286 pl. VI, 3-6). – **19** Lenkovcy. – **20** Mihajlovka. – **21** Monor-Csévpuszta (after Kóhegyi 1982, 316 pl. X, 24-25). – **22** Monor area (after Kóhegyi 1982, 294 pl. VII, 4-17). – **23** Porogi (after Simonenko/Lobaj 1991, fig. 19). – **24** Pusztamonostor (after Kóhegyi 1982, 297 pl. VII, 19). – **25** Şendreni. – **26** Sokolova Mogila (after Kovpanenko 1986, *passim*). – **27** Szolnok-Szőlősi halom (after Kóhegyi 1982, 301 pl. VII, 24-25). – **28** Tápiószéle-Szumrák (after Kóhegyi 1982, 303 pl. VII, 27). – **29** Tarnaméra-Urak dűlő, Grave 4 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 324. 326 pl. XII, 8-23). – **30** Tenk-Homokbánya (after Kóhegyi 1985, 303 pl. VIII, 2-3). – **31** Turlaki (after Grosu 1990, 38-42). – **32** Vităneşti. – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

few Pontic counterparts, dress ornaments have good analogies in the northern Pontic that can be regionally and chronologically linked to the Hungarian pieces<sup>565</sup>. Suffice it here to mention the find assemblages of the Golden Cemetery type<sup>566</sup>, containing geometric, vegetal and zoomorphic plaques used as dress adornments. The ornament types found here include pieces resembling the ones found in Hungary: the four and six petalled rosettes, the tubular variants (that is to say, beads) and the lozenge-shaped ornaments with an upper and lower frame. They were highly popular among the Sarmatians of the Lower Volga region, along the Don and the Kuban, and on the Pontic steppe in the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. Some were modelled on

<sup>565</sup> Most recently Marčenko 1996, 230 fig. 11.

<sup>566</sup> The aristocratic Sarmatian burials of the Kuban region from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD are so labelled.

**Fig. 155** Gold torcs: **1** Újszilvás-Gólyajárás. – **2** Nyíregyháza-Felsősimá, Grave 140/2 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished). – (Photos E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).



similar antique ornaments, others – particularly the zoomorphic types – can be derived from the Scythian-Sarmatian animal style<sup>567</sup>. The same forms appear alongside other varieties in Marčenko's book discussing the Siracian finds from the Kuban region. According to his chronological chart, some of the types of interest to us, such as the six petalled rosette, were typical for the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, although most of these ornaments can be assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD<sup>568</sup>.

### Gold Beads

Small tubes rolled from plain or ribbed sheet-gold (fig. 153, 11-13) were often used together with gold dress-adornments. Their number is not particularly high in the burials of the Hungarian Plain: most graves contained one to seven pieces, with five or six being usual.

Gold beads of this type were fashionable in the Pontic from the Hellenistic period onward. They were widely used during the Late Hellenistic period and the Early Roman Imperial period. They are often found together with four-petalled rosettes as at Novočerkassk-Hohlač, Sokolova Mogila, Ust'-Alma (Grave 612; fig. 86) and Buzău, or they were used in combination with geometric and figural dress-ornaments of sheet metal as at Porogi (Grave 2) and Ust'-Alma<sup>569</sup>.

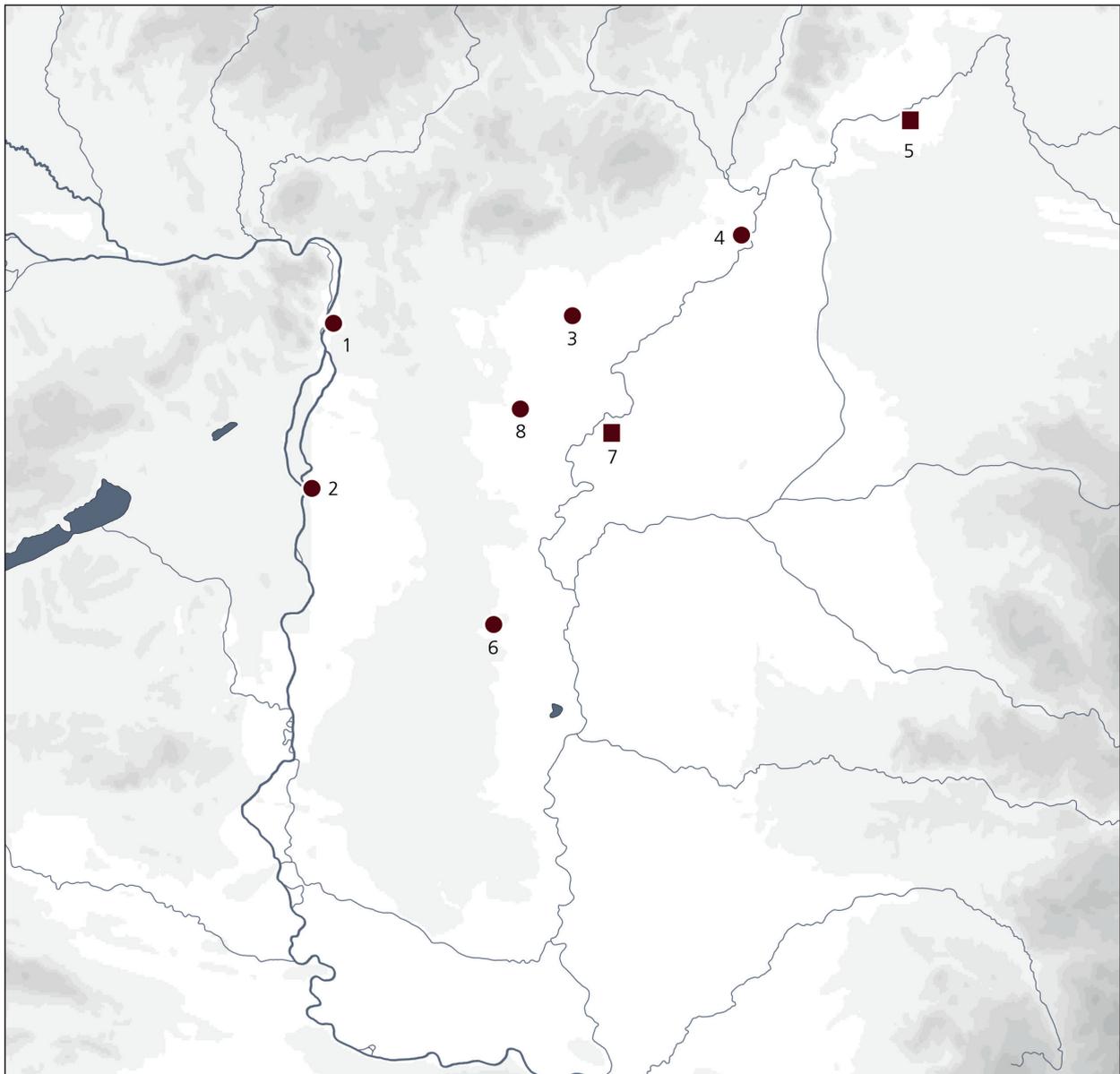
### Torcs

The finds of the early gold horizon include several gold torcs (figs 145. 155-156. 159). Neck rings were very popular among the Sarmatians. Gold variants of this jewellery item are rarely found, no doubt because

<sup>567</sup> Zaseckaja 1979, 111-112. – Guščina/Zaseckaja 1994, pl. 15. – Kovpanenko 1986, 40-41.

<sup>568</sup> Marčenko 1996, 230 fig. 11.

<sup>569</sup> Kovpanenko 1986, 43, with further literature. – Harhoiu 1993, fig. 1, 13-15. – Simonenko/Lobaj 1991, fig. 19, 3-4. – Puzdrovskij 2007, figs 110-111. 113. 115. 118-119.



**Fig. 156** Distribution of gold torcs in the Hungarian Plain: **1** Budapest-Káposztásmegyer (after Kóhegyi 1982, 307 pl. IX, 3). – **2** Duna-vecse (after Párducz 1931, 125). – **3** Füzesabony-Kettőshalom, Grave 1 (after Kóhegyi 1982, 305 pl. VIII, 15). – **4** Mezőcsát-Hórsögös, Grave 63 (after Vaday 1982/1983, 170 pls 4, 2; 6, 5). – **5** Nyíregyháza-Felsősima, Grave 140/2 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished). – **6** Szank-Móricgát (after Kóhegyi 1982, 326 pl. XIV, 3). – **7** Törökszentmiklós-Surján-Újtelep, Grave 54 (after Vaday 1989b, 286 cat. 415 pl. 141, 3) – **8** Újszilvás-Gólyajárás, Grave 1 (after Tari 1994, 259 fig. 2, 1). – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

many of the graves were looted in antiquity<sup>570</sup>. Golden torcs have been brought to light from both male and female burials, and they were recovered mostly from graves of the early horizon. They are absent after the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and appear again in the graves of the Hunnic aristocracy. The torcs all have a rectangular section and both ends are bent into a hook, the single exception being the torc from Törökszentmiklós-Surján-Újtelep Grave 54 which has loop terminals. The latter torc cannot be dated earlier than the close of

<sup>570</sup> Babolcsi 2004, 115, assembled a list of the known torcs (157 torcs from 96 sites) and found that no more than 4.5 per cent had been crafted from gold.



**Fig. 157** Necklaces strung of carnelian beads: **1** Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő, Grave 60. – **2** Nyíregyháza-Felsőszima, Grave 140/2 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished). – (1 photo Gy. Lónyai, courtesy of Cs. Farkas; 2 photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in view of the brooches found in the grave<sup>571</sup>. The gold torc with a hook and a loop closing recovered from Grave 140 of the Nyíregyháza-Felsőszima cemetery, yielding also a crescent pendant, can be assigned to the early pieces in view of its craftsmanship (fig. 155, 2). The other finds from the burial included a necklace strung with round carnelian beads (fig. 157).

The dating of the gold torcs is a crucial issue because torcs also appear in the royal burials of the neighbouring Germanic peoples, among whom these jewellery items functioned as insignia of rank. It has been

<sup>571</sup> Vaday 1985a, 367-368; 1989b, 286 cat. no. 415 pl. 141, 3.



**Fig. 158** Bucket pendant from Nyíregyháza-Felsősim, Grave 39. – (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).

suggested that these objects were gifts from the Romans and that they had an ultimately Celtic origin<sup>573</sup>. Another explanation for their origins is that torcs were adapted from the Sarmatians in the Germanic world, where they spread as far Denmark<sup>574</sup>. Gold torcs appeared on the steppe from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC onward, and can be found both in the heritage of the ancient Greeks and in the Sarmatian assemblages. Most finds of this type came to light in the northern Caucasus and the northern Pontic in the territories once occupied by the Sarmatians<sup>575</sup>.

### The Gold Finds of Early Sarmatian Burials in General

Surprisingly, the highest number of finds analogous to the Hungarian gold horizon are found in the Late Scythian burial grounds of the Crimea. The cemetery investigated at Ust'-Alma must certainly be mentioned in this respect, seeing that it yielded countless analogies to the pieces from the Hungarian Plain, such as wire-decorated earrings, ribbed gold tubes, gold bucket-pendants, dress ornaments of sheet gold (including four-petalled flower shaped ornaments) and round carnelian beads. Crescent-shaped gold pendants were also brought to light, although in smaller number; some of these resemble the lunulas from the Carpathian Basin, but lack cabochon inlays<sup>576</sup>. Most of the published graves contained leaf-shaped gold plaques, originally part of a funerary wreath, which can be likened to the gold plaques from Kiskőrös-Vágohid regarding their function (clarified by Kóhegyi<sup>577</sup>) even if sharing few similarities regarding their form. The best analogy to the snake-shaped finger-ring from Jászberény-Csegelapos also comes from Ust'-Alma<sup>578</sup>, a Late Scythian site dated to the middle and the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The burial rite and the finds (weapons, harness sets, Roman imports, belts, earrings) of the Ust'-Alma cemetery have much in common with the burials of this period (fig. 86)<sup>579</sup>.

The eastern connections of the gold artefacts from the earliest Sarmatian find assemblages of the Carpathian Basin thus lead far and wide. Some elements such as dress ornaments in the shape of four and six petalled rosettes, the small gold tubes, the lozenge and triangle shaped (ribbed) plaques and the bucket pendants (fig. 158), which can be derived from an Antique tradition flourishing since the Hellenistic period, have excellent parallels in the eastern Sarmatian lands, abounding among the finds recovered from the rich, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD burials of the northern Pontic and the Crimea. At the same time, jewellery of this type is conspicuously rare in the Lower Danube region (in the Republic of Moldova and the Odessa region, i. e. the Budžak steppe). This is all the more surprising because the first lazygian groups are assumed to have migrated to the Carpathian Basin from this region.

<sup>573</sup> Prohászka 2004, 51-52.

<sup>574</sup> von Carnap-Bornheim/Ilkjær 1996, 364.

<sup>575</sup> Guščina/Zaseckaja 1994, 16.

<sup>576</sup> Loboda/Puzdrovskij/Zajcev 2002. – Puzdrovskij 2007.

<sup>577</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 329-330.

<sup>578</sup> Vaday 1989b, 236 cat. no. 34 pl. 21, 1. – Puzdrovskij 2007, fig. 111, 9.

<sup>579</sup> The site was named after the river on whose bank it lies. The cemetery lies west of Peščanoe in the Bahčisaraj District. Loboda/Puzdrovskij/Zajcev 2002.



**Fig. 159** Carnelian beads and gold torc from Nyíregyháza-Felsőszima, Grave 140/2. – (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).

Several elements of the gold horizon have few or no analogies among the steppe assemblages. These include horseshoe-shaped pendants and earrings decorated with cabochons and granulation, which have no counterparts in the Antique towns of the northern Pontic or in the eastern Sarmatian material. Neither are there any prototypes in Hellenistic goldwork. A clarification of the origins of these jewellery items is crucial for the early history of the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin, however, this issue remains unresolved for the time being due to the lack of analogous finds.

### Carnelian Beads

In addition to gold jewellery, round carnelian beads are also typical articles in the early Sarmatian material of the Carpathian Basin (figs 157. 159). Most burials contain a roughly similar number of beads, usually between 36 and 38, the reason for this perhaps being that they were sold and purchased in strands strung with a specific number of beads.

Beads polished from carnelian represent the most widespread type among the Antique semi-precious beads of the northern Pontic. Alekseeva distinguished 29 types among the 2,167 pieces known to her. The parallels to the small round beads with a narrow perforation occurring in the early Sarmatian assemblages from the Carpathian Basin can be found among the pieces of her Type 2a, a widely distributed variant worn chiefly in the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD<sup>580</sup>.

Carnelian beads have been found in greater number in the Late Scythian cemeteries of the northern Pontic, for example at Bel'bek IV (Sevastopol). It must here be noted that one possible source of carnelian may have been the Crimea<sup>581</sup>.

What must be borne in mind is that while carnelian beads appear in the assemblages of the so-called gold horizon, they remained in use until the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, as shown by the find assem-

<sup>580</sup> Alekseeva 1982, 15.

<sup>581</sup> Stoljarova 2001, 205.

blages from Kiskőrös-Csukástó, Rác-kút Grave 7<sup>582</sup> and Szolnok-Szandaszőlős-Airfield<sup>583</sup>, where they were found together with enamelled brooches.

## Roman Artefacts (Brooches and Vessels) and Questions of Dating

The obvious question is how the jewellery items discussed above can be dated, seeing that the analogies from the northern Pontic do not provide a more precise date. Párducz initially asserted no more than that the first Pontic-Germanic assemblages as defined by him should be dated before the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century<sup>584</sup>. He never really refined this chronology: he assigned the finds from between 50 AD and the close of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century to his Group 1 of the Sarmatian period – the main consideration being that these finds could in part be dated by brooches and in part by coins<sup>585</sup>.

While Párducz based his dating scheme on brooches, Mócsy proposed that dating should rather rest on the lack of brooches. His basic idea was that brooches were alien to the Sarmatian costume, a nomadic attire, and that the first Sarmatian groups arriving in the Carpathian Basin could hardly have acquired Roman articles because, unlike their dealings with the Quadi, the Romans only established trade contacts with the Sarmatians at a later date. Scholarship uncritically accepted this hypothesis without taking the trouble to take even a cursory glance at the situation in the east<sup>586</sup>. However, in truth, a rich variety of brooches, representing variants differing from the ones of the Carpathian Basin (**figs 64. 76. 89**), can be found in the eastern assemblages of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, alongside an assortment of various other Roman artefacts<sup>587</sup>. It must also be noted that the Sarmatians sometimes reworked the brooches, using them as »badges« rather than as clasps for fastening their garment, as shown by the gold brooch from the rich female burial at Sokolova Mogila by the South Bug<sup>588</sup>.

There is a curious contradiction between Mócsy's hypothesis and his other claim, discussed above, that the lazyges were relocated by the Romans to the Danube-Tisza interfluvium. If the lazyges had indeed been resettled by the Romans to create a buffer state between the Empire and the Dacians, it is inconceivable that Rome's new allies would not have received a single gift, or that the Romans would have refused to trade with them. One of the two claims is untenable for this reason alone. Thus, the discovery of Roman articles in the earliest Sarmatian assemblages cannot be ruled out on theoretical grounds. Let us now look at the archaeological record.

## Brooches

Few brooches are known from the assemblages of the early gold horizon. The known pieces come from Füzesabony-Kastélydűlő Grave 140<sup>589</sup>, Mezőcsát-Hörösögös Grave 63<sup>590</sup>, Nagykőrös-Marsó tanya<sup>591</sup>, Örvény-Seres szőlő<sup>592</sup>, Regőce (today Riđica-Idina in Serbia)<sup>593</sup> and Újszilvás-Gólyajárás<sup>594</sup> (**fig. 160**).

582 Párducz 1941a, 57.

583 Vaday 1989b, 270 cat. no. 296.

584 Párducz 1935, 112.

585 Párducz 1941a, 75. Párducz accordingly dated Group 2 (Szen-tes-Nagyhegy) after 180 (Párducz 1956, 166).

586 Mócsy 1954, 115, is repeated by Vaday 1989b, 75: »Zu der nomadischen Tracht, wo die Kleidung einen Ärmel hatte, gehörte nämlich keine Fibel«.

587 Discussed in detail by Kulcsár 1998a, 52.

588 Kovpanenko 1986, 39. A similar find can be quoted from Hungary: a thread was drawn through the coils of one of the brooches from Tiszadob, dated to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century (Istvánovits 1993b, 114).

589 Farkas 2000b, 17 fig. 12, 5.

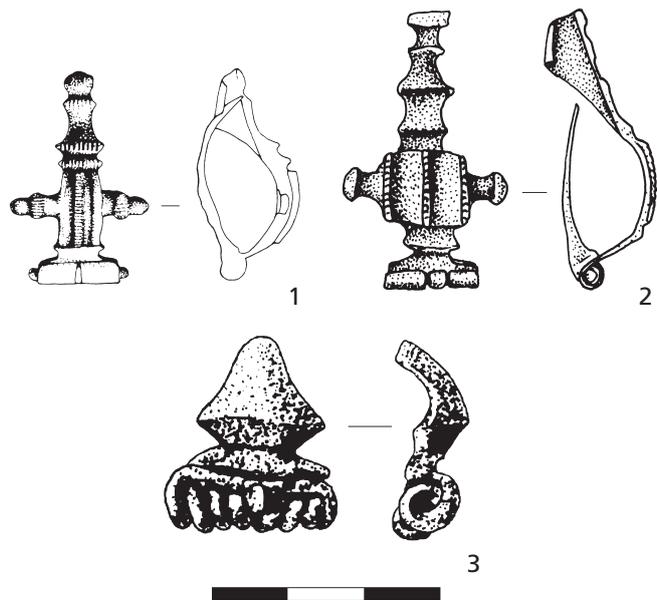
590 Vaday 1982/1983, 177 pl. 6. 7.

591 Kóhegyi 1982, 295.

592 Kóhegyi 1982, 296.

593 Kóhegyi 1982, 299.

594 Tari 1994, 259 fig. 2, 2.



**Fig. 160** Brooches from early Sarmatian assemblages of the Carpathian Basin: **1** Újszilvás-Gólyajárás (after Tari 1994, 259 fig. 2, 2). – **2** Mezőcsát-Hörcsögös, Grave 63 (after Vaday 1982/1983, 177 pl. 6, 7). – **3** Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő, Grave 140 (after Farkas 2000b, 17 fig. 12, 5).

The pieces from Mezőcsát and Újszilvás can be assigned to the so-called hinge-pin brooches (*Scharnierflügelfibeln*). In her discussion of the brooch from Mezőcsát, Vaday argued that the brooch had reached the Sarmatians through trade or war booty, and that it most likely originated from Quadian territory. This seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the type is known from Pannonia and from Slovakia, where they appear among the early imports. The majority of the hinge-pin brooches, however, are known from the eastern provinces and they were especially popular during the Flavian period, i. e. the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>595</sup>, the main reason that Vaday dated the specimen from Mezőcsát to her early group (the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century). This chronological attribution is crucial because the brooch provided the key for Vaday's separation of the gold horizon into two chronological groups<sup>596</sup>.

Another brooch of this type came to light at Újszilvás from a grave that, in addition to the hinge-pin brooch, also contained a ring-pommel short sword. The early date of the brooch implied that this sword type had appeared in the Carpathian Basin at an earlier date than previously assumed or, more likely, that the assemblage dates from the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The contemporaneity of the two sites can hardly be challenged in view of the great resemblance between the brooches from Mezőcsát and Újszilvás, meaning that both burials probably date from the time of Trajan's war against the Dacians. This is confirmed by the brooch fragment from Füzesabony, as will be shown below.

The origins of hinge-pin brooches are uncertain. They are rare in Pannonia and Slovakia<sup>597</sup>. In 1966, Ambroz listed five pieces from the European territory of the Soviet Union, among them the closest analogy from Chersonesus. This list can now be supplemented with the half dozen hinge-pin brooches from the Ust'-Alma cemetery in the Crimea, of which the piece from Grave 613 is the most exact counterpart of the two specimens from the Hungarian Plain<sup>598</sup>. These two Crimean pieces are particularly striking, raising the

<sup>595</sup> Vaday 1982/1983, 177. 180. The pieces from Mezőcsát and Újszilvás belong to a special group of hinge-pin brooches (Riha 1979, type 7.5). This type was exported to Pannonia from the western provinces (Riha 1979, 127).

<sup>596</sup> Vaday 1982/1983, 180 n. 172.

<sup>597</sup> Contrary to the pieces found on the Hungarian Plain, Pannonian analogies (cf. Patek 1942, 118. 203) cited by Vaday 1982/1983, 177. 180, are enamelled. From the territory of Slovakia eight hinge-pin brooches were collected, but no versions similar to ours had been found there (Krekovič 2001, 95).

<sup>598</sup> Ambroz 1966, 27 pl. 14, 6. – Puzdrovskij 2007, 181 fig. 204, 6.

question of whether these Roman brooches had perhaps been brought from this region by the immigrants in the Carpathian Basin.

The brooch from Füzesabony is broken and only its head has survived<sup>599</sup>. The fragment suggests that it was a strongly profiled (*kräftig profilierte*) brooch of the type used from the Claudian period onward. Brooches of this type also appeared in the Barbaricum, where they were fairly widespread in the middle quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>600</sup>. Ambroz dated the earliest pieces to the reign of Tiberius and demonstrated that they were principally found in eastern Ukraine, in the distribution of the Lipica and Przeworsk cultures. Brooches of this type have been reported from the Crimea as well<sup>601</sup>.

The brooch from Örvény represents the strongly profiled brooches of the Pontic type<sup>602</sup>. Párducz quoted an exact counterpart of this variant from Grave 20 of the Szeged-Felsőpusztaszer cemetery, correctly noting that the grave goods from this burial can be assigned to the next find horizon despite the occurrence of a gold lunula and carnelian beads<sup>603</sup>. A similar piece was found at Fülöpkei Jakabszállás<sup>604</sup>. Vaday cited analogies from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD to the Örvény brooch from both pre-Roman Dacia and a Roman province (Singidunum). It must here be noted that this brooch type had a wide distribution as far as the Lower Volga region, including the north-western Pontic (Porogi) and the Crimea (e.g. Ust'-Alma, the site most often quoted in connection with the early find horizon). These pieces are generally dated to the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD (phase B2a, the reign of Domitian and Trajan), and the smaller pieces resembling the ones from Örvény and Szeged-Felsőpusztaszer are usually considered to represent an earlier variant. According to the most recent views, the brooches were produced in Dacian or Bosporan workshops, although a few specimens originating from the Danubian provinces have been discovered in the east. What is important for us here is that the strongly profiled brooches so widespread in the west definitely had a northern Pontic variant<sup>605</sup>.

In the light of the above, the suggestion that the lack of Roman artefacts – with the exception of expressly Pannonian products – should be treated as a chronological indicator can be definitely rejected. Additionally, the possibility must also be considered that the Roman artefacts found in Sarmatian assemblages of the late 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries reached the Hungarian Plain, not from the west, but from the east, and were brought here by the first immigrant groups.

The find assemblage from Nagykörű contained a La Tène brooch. Kóhegyi had suggested that this piece was not contemporaneous with the other finds, but had somehow become mixed up with the finds<sup>606</sup>. Virtually nothing is known about the piece from Regőce and it must therefore be omitted from our analysis.

## Pottery

Burials of the gold horizon often contain pottery (**fig. 161**), which was predominantly hand-built. The ceramic finds also include a few typical Roman vessels such as the pieces from Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő Grave

<sup>599</sup> A broken artefact found in an unlooted grave in itself calls for caution as regards dating. For the problems of the time-lag between the manufacture, the use and the deposition of a particular artefact, see Vaday 1982/1983, 168.

<sup>600</sup> Peškař 1972, 77-78.

<sup>601</sup> Ambroz 1966, 36 pl. 7, 1-4. We must again quote the Ust'-Alma cemetery: Puzdrovskij 2007, 176-177 fig. 197, 5-6.

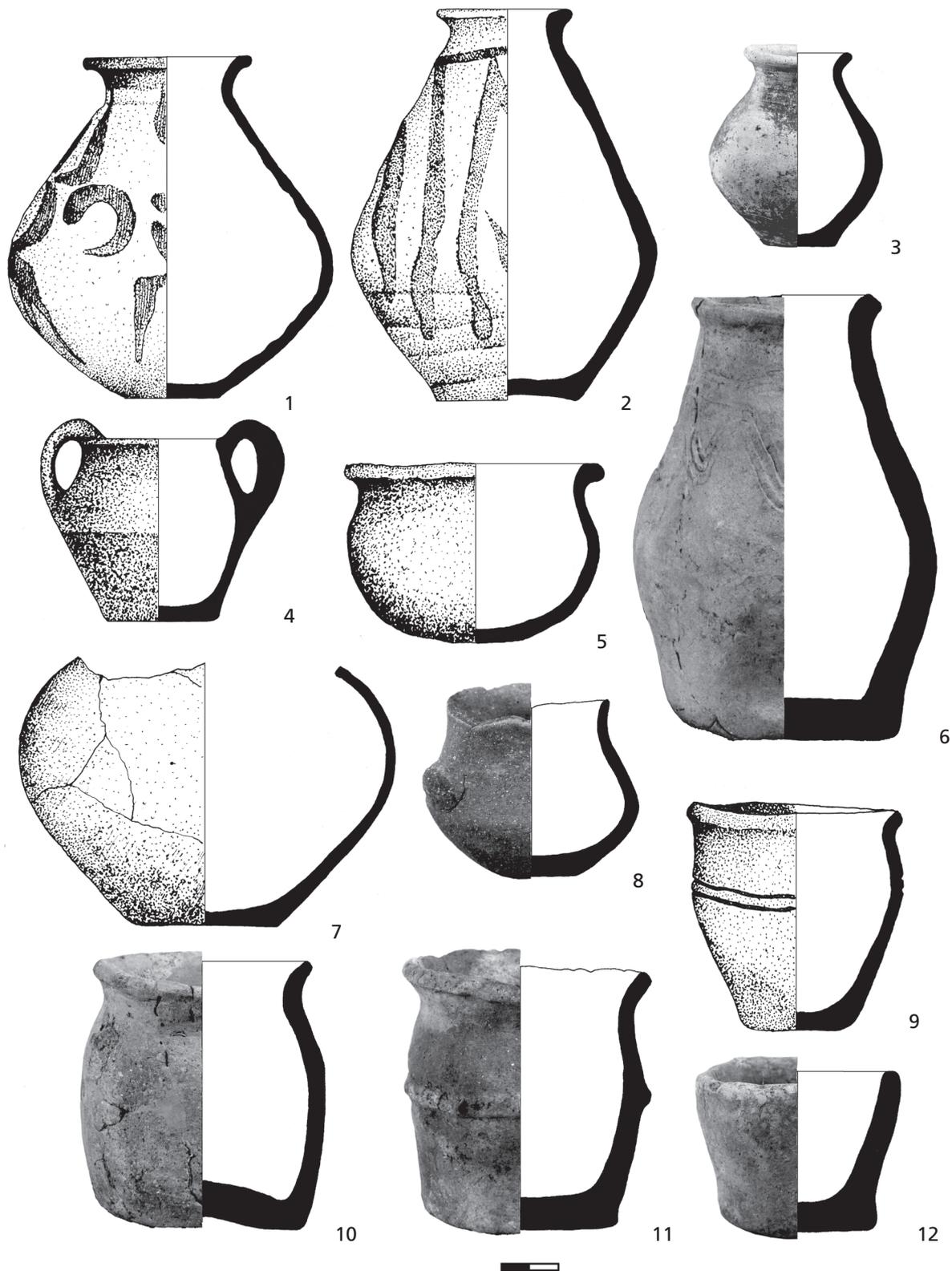
<sup>602</sup> Cociş 2004, 42-44 Type 6.

<sup>603</sup> Párducz 1941b.

<sup>604</sup> Párducz 1941a, 45-46 pl. II, 9a-b.

<sup>605</sup> Párducz 1941a, 68; 1941b. – Vaday 1989b, 77. – Puzdrovskij 2007, 188 fig. 203. – Cociş 2004, 42-44, demonstrated that this brooch type attained its greatest popularity in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. Its use has been documented in Moesia Superior, Pannonia, the northern Pontic and among the Sarmatians living east of the Carpathians, as well as in Slovakia and Dacia.

<sup>606</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 295-296.



**Fig. 161** Vessels from early Sarmatian assemblages of the Carpathian Basin: **1. 4-5. 7. 9** Mezőcsát-Hörcsögös (after Vaday 1982/1983). – **2** Tápíószele-Szumrák (after Vaday 1982/1983, pl. 5, 6). – **3. 6. 8. 10-12** Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő (after Farkas 2000b).

125 and Mezőcsát-Hörcsögös, Grave 56<sup>607</sup>. In her description of the ceramic inventory from the Mezőcsát cemetery, Vaday noted that Germanic vessels, specifically Quadian wares, made an appearance in the earliest Sarmatian graves (fig. 161, 5. 9)<sup>608</sup>.

It is clear from the above that the lazyges settling in the Carpathian Basin had begun using various Roman artefacts from an early date, even if in fairly low numbers. The pieces in question can be dated to the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century or the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. We have also seen that assemblages lacking Roman articles cannot be precisely dated and that no more than an educated guess can be made regarding their chronological position. While it would be tempting to assume that there was an earlier horizon predating the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the current evidence does not support this. The number of finds is minimal and most of them are stray finds. Vaday's otherwise compelling theory on the »dilution« of the assemblages from the northern Pontic would only be acceptable if we were to discover a larger grave group whose burials contained the jewellery sets in a »pure« form. Obviously, these burials would merely form a smaller group in the cemetery because there is no reason to assume that the earliest burial grounds were abandoned after a generation. According to Vaday's model, the cemetery would contain the burials reflecting the »dilution« of the northern Pontic types. However, none of the currently known sites conform to this model.

None of the Roman articles in the currently known assemblages allow a date preceding the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. It must again be emphasised that the current corpus of finds does not include a single closed, professionally excavated grave assemblage dating from an earlier period.

## Burial Rites

Little is known about burial rites because the bulk of the material assigned to the early horizon reached the museums as stray finds (fig. 162). Our information comes from a few sites, such as the cemetery investigated at Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő<sup>609</sup>. The burials brought to light at Kelebia-Vermesjárás<sup>610</sup>, Mezőcsát-Hörcsögös<sup>611</sup>, Tápiószele-Szumrák-dűlő<sup>612</sup> and Újszilvás-Gólyajárás<sup>613</sup> also provided new information.

The currently available evidence indicates that the burials were south to north orientated or diverged only slightly from this alignment. Most graves contained female burials; the lack of male burials is quite typical. In the case of well-recorded graves, log coffins were observed. The graves were rarely looted; one exception is Grave 62 of the Mezőcsát-Hörcsögös cemetery. On the testimony of Grave 150 from Füzesabony, the appearance of beaded costumes – beaded belts and the custom of embroidering dress or trouser hems and shoes with beads, suggested by the high number of beads in the region of the feet – can be dated to the period when gold earrings, gold beads and gold lunulas were part of jewellery sets and occurred together. The other finds in the graves containing gold articles do not differ from the inventory of later burials: spin-dles, pyxides (bronze containers hanging on a ring), bracelets, mirrors and clay vessels.

The burial customs of the early group survived in an almost unchanged form among the Sarmatians of later periods on the Hungarian Plain, although coloured with some new features. Later, the proportion of male and female burials changed and grave looting became widespread. It must be noted that one explanation for the lavish gold articles in the early burials is the lack of grave looting and it is quite possible that the gold finds of the early horizon »disappeared« abruptly because later burials were systematically robbed. (In order

<sup>607</sup> Farkas 2000b, 26 fig. 11, 9. – Vaday 1982/1983, 169 pl. 5, 5.

<sup>608</sup> Vaday 1982/1983, 171.

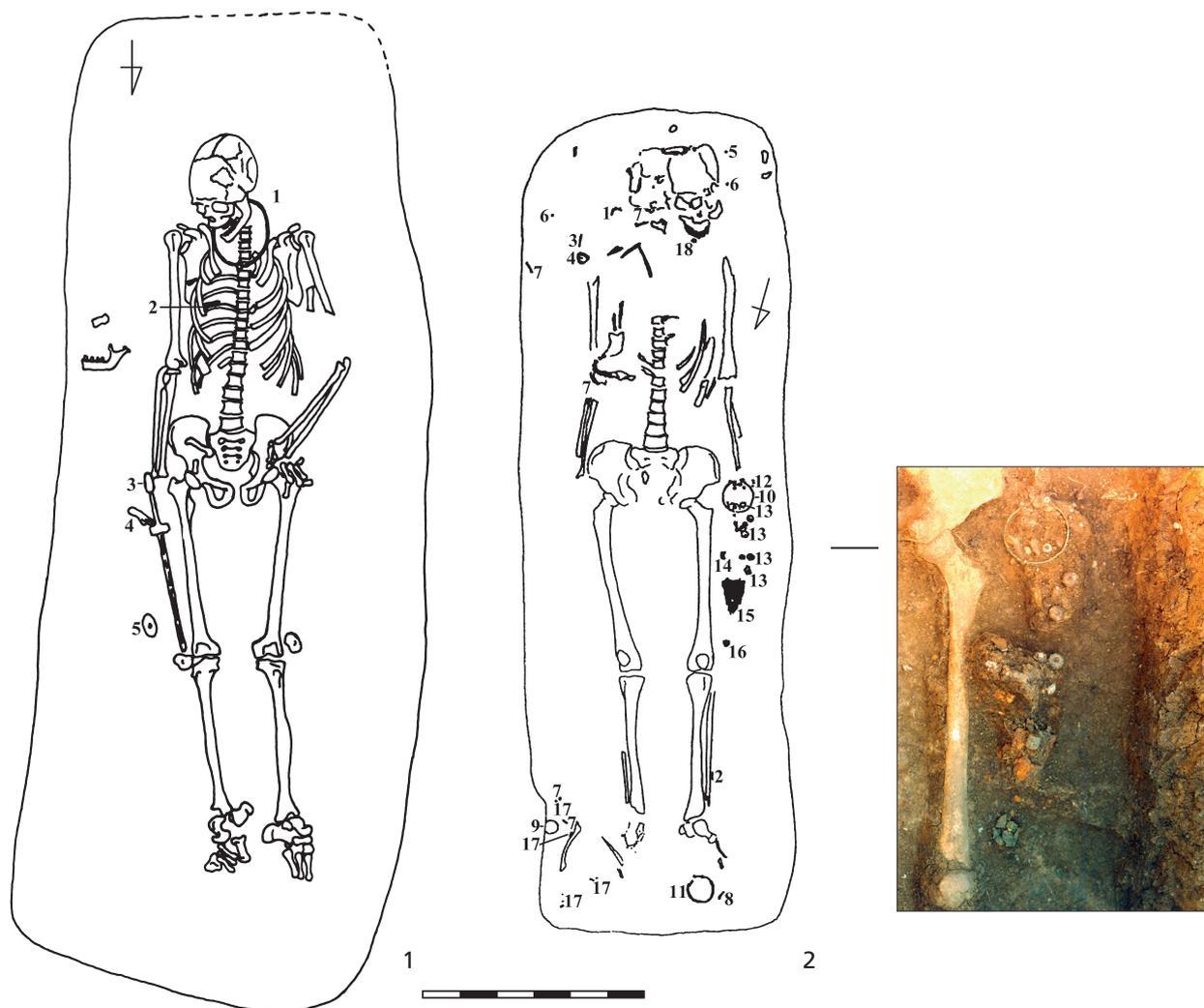
<sup>609</sup> Farkas 2000b.

<sup>610</sup> Kóhegyi 1982, 279-284.

<sup>611</sup> Vaday 1982/1983.

<sup>612</sup> Párducz 1950b; 1956, 179.

<sup>613</sup> Tari 1994.



**Fig. 162** Early Sarmatian burials: **1** Újszilvás-Gólyajárás (after Tari 1994, fig. 2, 1). – **2** Füzesabony-Kastély-dűlő, Grave 150 (after Farkas 2000b, fig. 8; photo Cs. Farkas).

to make conclusions about the richness of the Sarmatian society in the Carpathian Basin, we have collected all known burials containing golden objects in a recent study<sup>614</sup>. As a result we have 96 graves from 71 sites, with around 237 or more pure golden objects or sets of objects, e. g. golden plaques decorating the dress. These data show that rich grave-goods were relatively frequent in Sarmatian cemeteries, and this is the most probable reason for their heavy looting.) The lack of later burials is striking in the Füzesabony and Mezőcsát cemeteries, both of which contained burials richly furnished with gold.

Considering the chronological framework outlined above, we are faced with a far from negligible problem, namely, that several cemeteries that were already in use during the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (the very period before which the gold horizon cannot be dated) did not yield any of the finds discussed in the above, only single ones, e. g. the scarce carnelian beads. The early date of these burial grounds is based on the occurrence of Roman brooches. These cemeteries include the early burials at Szeged-Felsőpusztaszer, used over several generations as indicated by finds of the so-called Sarmatian buckle, coins of Antoninus Pius, etc<sup>615</sup>. The simultaneous use of two types of burial grounds, one with gold finds, the other lacking ar-

<sup>614</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2013.

<sup>615</sup> Párducz 1941a, 74-75.

ticles of gold, calls for an explanation. While it seems unlikely that they were used by different social groups, which might explain the divergences between them, it is possible that the differences can be attributed to their use by different ethnic groups. In this case, it is especially striking that most graves of the gold horizon were female burials and that these cemeteries were used for no more than one or two generations.

The virtual lack of male burials in the cemeteries of the gold horizon resembles an earlier situation. The overwhelming majority of pre-Scythian assemblages (8<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) were found in roughly the same area as the early Sarmatian finds discussed here. The burial grounds of the pre-Scythian period are also characterised by a similar lack of male burials<sup>616</sup>. The question arises whether there might be a similar explanation for this phenomenon in both periods.

### The Contradiction Between the Written Sources and the Archaeological Record

The above shed light on the contradiction between the picture emerging from the written sources and the one outlined by the archaeological finds. The arrival of the lazyges can be dated to the first quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, if the reports of the classical authors are to be believed, while the archaeological assemblages cannot be dated before the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

One possible explanation for the time-gap might be sought in the Sarmatians' mobile life-style, as suggested by Pekáry on the basis of the literary data, who noted that the Danube-Tisza interfluvium is not particularly suited to permanent settlement, and that later sources also emphasised the *vagus* («wandering») nature of the Sarmatians. The nomadism of the Sarmatians settling the Hungarian Plain has been a recurrent theme in Sarmatian studies<sup>617</sup>. However, the geographic conditions in the Carpathian Basin are unsuited to nomadism.

In our view, the most obvious reason for the time-gap is that the earliest groups, such as Vannius' lazygian cavalry, were made up of mercenaries. The sources probably reported on the raids of Sarmatians of the Lower Danube region, and thus the lack of finds is hardly surprising.

It must also be noted that while the eastern steppe find assemblages are undoubtedly richer than the burials in the Carpathian Basin, the finest and most outstanding pieces were either gifts or imports. Disregarding these articles, the overall picture is much humbler. This relative poorness is coloured by local elements in the archaeological material, reflecting regional traits from interaction with the local population, leading to both the adoption and the transmission of cultural goods, resulting in a colourful patchwork of regional groups. This is the reason for the differences between the Sarmatian material from the Lower Don region, the Kuban, the Central Caucasus, the northern Pontic and, for that matter, from the Carpathian Basin<sup>618</sup>. This cultural interaction explains why the identification of the archaeological heritage of a particular tribe is difficult, as is the determination of the migration route taken by different groups or tribes.

Positing an early date for the Sarmatians' arrival, we must assume a rapid migration and/or a low number of migrants. On the testimony of the archaeological finds, the Sarmatian occupation of the Budžak steppe, i. e. the Lower Danube region, only began in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. A more massive Sarmatian presence in the Prut-Dniester interfluvium can likewise be demonstrated only from the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>619</sup>.

<sup>616</sup> Éry 1989/1990, 121.

<sup>618</sup> Abramova 1994, 9.

<sup>617</sup> Pekáry 1955, 99. See also e. g. Bartosiewicz 1999, 326-327. – Vaday/Szekeres 2001, 232-233.

<sup>619</sup> Gudkova/Fokeev 1984, 87-88.

## The Neighbouring Barbarian Peoples: Dacians, Celts and Germans

The neighbourhood of Germanic peoples, the Marcomanni and the Quadi, has been discussed in connection with the arrival and settlement of the first Sarmatian groups. According to Pliny:

[...] the plains and level country [...] are occupied by the Sarmatian lazyges, while the Dacians whom they have driven out hold the mountains and forests as far as the river Theiss<sup>620</sup>.

Before the arrival of the Sarmatians, the greater part of the Hungarian Plain was ruled by the Dacians, who represented a military power acknowledged by Roman foreign policy since Caesar and who, not least, controlled the gold mines in Transylvania. Pliny noted that the Dacians were driven away from a part of their earlier lands in the Carpathian Basin by the Sarmatians. This passage is at variance with the archaeological record because barely any Dacian finds are known from the Hungarian Plain from the period preceding the Sarmatians' arrival<sup>621</sup>. The earliest Sarmatian settlement territory, or a part of it, lay in the north-western quarter of the Dacian kingdom, in the areas occupied by the subjugated Osi and Cotini (two peoples of probably Celtic stock). Augustus' punitive campaign against the Dacians led by Marcus Vinicius in retaliation for the incursions of 11-10 BC was directed against this territory<sup>622</sup>. The weakening of the Dacians after the campaign eased the lazyges' settlement. That the lazyges' arrival affected the Osi and Cotini is amply documented by a passage in Tacitus:

Behind them the Marsigni, Gotini, Osi, and Buri, close in the rear of the Marcomanni and Quadi. [...] The Gotini and Osi are proved by their respective Gallic and Pannonian tongues, as well as by the fact of their enduring tribute, not to be Germans. Tribute is imposed on them as aliens, partly by the Sarmatae, partly by the Quadi. The Gotini, to complete their degradation, actually work iron mines. All these nations occupy but little of the plain country, dwelling in forests and on mountain-tops<sup>623</sup>.

Tacitus thus reports that the lazyges were neighbours of the Osi and the Cotini. One tribe lived among the hills facing Aquincum: this people can be identified with the Osi because the Cotini are known to have resided along the Hron and to its east<sup>624</sup>. Conforming to the literary evidence, a destruction horizon can be demonstrated in the distribution of the Púchov culture in western Slovakia in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, which has generally been interpreted as caused by the attack of a non-local population. The Púchov culture is conventionally identified with the Cotini, on the testimony of the written sources<sup>625</sup>. The situation is less clear in the more easterly areas from where very few 1<sup>st</sup> century find assemblages are known.

The scarcity of Celtic and Dacian finds from the period directly preceding the Sarmatians' arrival is a source of serious headache in Sarmatian studies. It has been suggested that the lazyges arrived in an uninhabited or sparsely populated land. This question needs further research. Evaluation of the huge find material from the Late Iron Age and Early Roman Age found in the course of large-scale preventive excavations will probably give some clue. At the same time, we can assume that there are some scarce Celtic and Dacian finds (or at least objects of such influence) and several Roman pieces from the period before the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century<sup>626</sup>.

<sup>620</sup> Plin. *NH* IV.XII.80-81.

<sup>621</sup> Vaday 1990/1991. – Visy 1995, with the earlier literature.

<sup>622</sup> Alföldi 1942b, 36-37. The exact location of the Osi and the Cotini is subject to controversy, see Pleiner 1964, 51-53.

<sup>623</sup> Tacit. *Germ.* 43.

<sup>624</sup> Mócsy 1954, 118.

<sup>625</sup> Pieta 1982, 215-217. For the possible Dacian stock of the Cotini, see Visy 1995, 103-104, with an overview of the earlier literature.

<sup>626</sup> Cf. Párducz 1941a, 60-67.

Dacian power was severely shaken after Burebista's death and in the wake of Vinicius' punitive campaign mentioned above. From a Sarmatian perspective, the situation was equally favourable on the Germanic front as it was on the Dacian one. However, this situation did not last for long. The new Germanic power increased under Vannius and the lazyges were driven out from the Carnuntum area and forced to retreat beyond the Váh. Not much later, Vannius himself and his lazygian allies suffered a crushing defeat. It seems unlikely that the lazyges would have relinquished their former lands following their settlement in the Carpathian Basin. Alföldi's assertion that the lazygian settlement territory extended from the Olt through the Banat and the Danube-Tisza interfluvium to the Little Hungarian Plain and Carnuntum<sup>627</sup> has already been quoted when discussing his model of a buffer state. The boundary between the lazyges and the Roxolani lay along the River Olt. There is one important piece of evidence confirming that the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain represented a group that had broken away from the lazyges and that a part of the lazyges (or perhaps the majority) remained in the Lower Danube region. The lazyges are marked as *laziges Metanastae* on Ptolemy's map of European Sarmatia (fig. 144), while another lazygian group is located on the shore of the Maeotis. The adjective *metanastae* was designed to distinguish the migrant population group. Hungarian research has overlooked Kulakovskij's careful reading of Ptolemy's work. He was the first to point out that when the first Sarmatians appeared in the Carpathian Basin, the lazyges could hardly have lived on the shore of the Maeotis because that territory was by then occupied by the Roxolani. He also noted that the adjective *metanastae* does not appear in any other source<sup>628</sup>. The history of the Roxolani in the Carpathian Basin will be covered in the next chapters.

## THE PERIOD OF THE DACIAN WARS

### History of the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin until the Creation of the Province of Dacia

The migration and settlement of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin was still underway in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, determining the course of events in the region and also its political history. Roman efforts were consistently aimed at keeping the barbarians at bay, the Sarmatians amongst them. In 69 AD, the Year of the Four Emperors, the Roxolani devastated the Lower Danube region<sup>629</sup>. Apparently, the unrest among the newly-arrived lazyges in the foreground of Pannonia during the turmoil of the civil war in Rome did not pose a serious threat because the involvement of the Moesian and Pannonian troops in the Roman civil war, i.e. the withdrawal of the greater part of the soldiers stationed there, did not have any serious consequences. Peace was perhaps maintained by the existing system of alliances or perhaps by the lower number of lazyges in their newly-occupied territory. Aponius Saturninus, the Moesian legate, marched to Rome with his army:

That the provinces might not be exposed without defence to the barbarian tribes, the princes of the Sarmatae lazyges, who had in their hands the government of that nation, were enrolled in the army. These chiefs also offered the service of their people, and its force of cavalry, their

<sup>627</sup> The fact that the first coins made their appearance among the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain and the Lower Danube region at roughly the same time, during Nero's reign, is usually quoted in support of this assumption (Barkóczy 1957, 501, with further literature.).

<sup>628</sup> Kulakovskij 2000, 262. – Mócsy 1954, 119. As mentioned, the use of this adjective was one of the counter-arguments against the buffer state theory (Vaday 1990/1991, 75).

<sup>629</sup> Also discussed in the previous chapter.

only effective troops; but the offer was declined, lest in the midst of civil strife they should attempt some hostile enterprise, or, influenced by higher offers from other quarters, should cast off all sense of right and duty<sup>630</sup>.

Tacitus' report has already been quoted as proof for the existence of Sarmatian mercenaries; here, we shall examine this passage from another perspective.

Mócsy noted that Tampius Flavianus, the Pannonian governor, detained the lazyges' chiefs as hostages:

That these measures were based on sound judgement is indicated by the peaceful conditions which prevailed in Pannonia during the period of the crisis in contrast with those of Moesia. [...] For his diplomatic successes Tampius Flavianus received the triumphal insignia from Vespasian<sup>631</sup>.

In other words, the »alliance« mentioned by Tacitus was secured through the hostages picked by Rome. It seems to us that the mention of »higher offers« and the conclusion of an alliance rather imply that the Romans subsidised the Sarmatians in exchange for peace. It is not mere chance, then, that Roman coins of the 1<sup>st</sup> century appear among the finds of the Sarmatians living in the Hungarian Plain, even if their number is not particularly high<sup>632</sup>. The earliest coin in the Abony hoard is one minted under Vespasian<sup>633</sup>. It remains to be established whether this Roman policy was effective. According to Tacitus »a report was rife that our winter camps in Moesia and Pannonia were hemmed in by the Sarmatians and Dacians«<sup>634</sup>. This is the single indication that the situation was far from calm in the Pannonian area. It is possible, although it cannot be proven, that Tampius Flavianus transplanted a large mass of barbarian peoples from northern or eastern Hungary to the province in order to quell the unrest<sup>635</sup>. Is it possible that the Sarmatians did not find the Romans generous enough?

After the turmoil of the civil war subsided, Vespasian adopted a new frontier policy. As has been mentioned in the discussion of the events on the Lower Danube, the construction of forts was principally begun in Moesia after the imminent barbarian threat had subsided and the Roman civil war came to an end (fig. 88). The growing Sarmatian danger is reflected by Vespasian's decision to devise a new, all-encompassing military strategy. The stone camp at Aquincum, for example, was constructed as part of this plan<sup>636</sup>.

Incursions were quite frequent because the »rife reports«, as was usually the case, were not wholly unfounded. The Romans also had to deal with Sarmatian incursions. The situation turned from bad to worse in the Middle Danube Valley under Domitian<sup>637</sup>. The concentration of troops in Pannonia and the increase of military power are eloquent proof that mischief was brewing among the neighbouring barbarian peoples<sup>638</sup>. In 73 AD at the latest, cavalry, which could efficiently combat Sarmatian military tactics, had been stationed in Aquincum<sup>639</sup>.

<sup>630</sup> Tacit. *Hist.* III.5.

<sup>631</sup> Mócsy 1974, 42.

<sup>632</sup> Few coins are known from the period between Augustus and Domitian, although it must also be borne in mind that prior to Vespasian's reign, coin circulation was relatively irregular in Pannonia as well, and that the province's circulation only began to resemble the main pattern of the Empire's coin minting from Vespasian's reign (Fitz 1973/1974. – Lányi 1979; 1990, 212).

<sup>633</sup> Kóhegyi 1972, 103. We know that the Roxolani received a subsidy from the Romans from SHA Hadr. VI: »the king of the Roxolani complained of the diminution of his subsidy, he [Hadrian] investigated his case and made peace with him«.

<sup>634</sup> Tacit. *Hist.* IV.54.

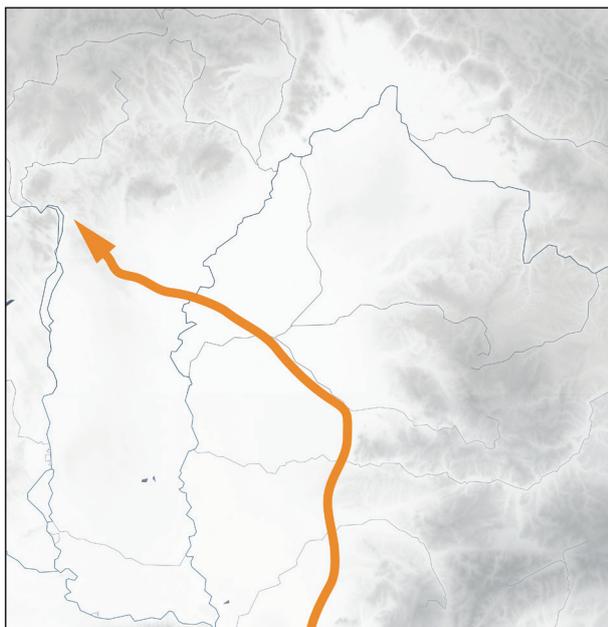
<sup>635</sup> Alföldi 1939b, 103-104.

<sup>636</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 186. – Tóth/Vékony 1970a; 1970b. – Tóth 1978.

<sup>637</sup> Statius *Silv.* III.3.168-171. – Pekáry 1955, 98-99. – Fehér/Kovács 2005b, 57.

<sup>638</sup> For the military re-organisation, see Alföldi 1942a, 184, with further literature, and Mócsy 1974, 99-100.

<sup>639</sup> Kérdő/Németh 1993, 48. The unit in question was the *ala I Tungrorum Frontoniana*.



**Fig. 163** Reconstruction of the route of Velius Rufus' campaign. – (Map E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár, based on Strobel 1989, 87. 96-98; map M. Ober, RGZM).

In the winter of 85/86 AD, the Dacians swept into Moesia and annihilated the Roman troops. G. Oppius Sabinus, the province's governor, and Cornelius Fuscus, commander of the praetorian guard, both lost their lives in battle, and an entire legion, the *Legio V Alaudae*, perished. Only in 88 AD did Tettius Julianus succeed in vanquishing the Dacians at the gates of Transylvania, somewhere north-east of Caransebeş. Despite Roman requests, the Quadi and the Marcomanni refused to provide military aid against the Dacians. Domitian »entered Pannonia with the intention of making war upon them; and he put to death the second group of envoys which had been sent by the enemy to propose terms of peace«<sup>640</sup>. The war against the Quadi and the Marcomanni had one grave consequence: the Sarmatians also became involved and thus the Roman front stretched from Noricum to the Pontic<sup>641</sup>. Domitian was forced to reach an agreement with the Dacians owing to his battles against the Quadic-Marcomannic-Sarmatian

forces and, also, because he led his armies against them through »the kingdom of Decebal, king of the Dacians«<sup>642</sup>. The probable date of the *expeditio Marcomannica* was 89. A formidable Roman army of eight legions led by C. Velius Rufus was dispatched. According to Strobel, the troops marched from Viminacium along the northern fringes of the Banat and through western Transylvania toward the White Körös, then turned north and advanced as far as the Tisza, reaching the lazyges in the northern part of the Danube-Tisza interfluve (**fig. 163**)<sup>643</sup>.

Even though the Romans had temporarily concluded the war and re-installed a part of their troops at their permanent base, several *vexillationes* remained along the Danube. The peace was short-lived. Cassius Dio reported that in 92 AD, hostilities broke out between two Germanic tribes, the Suebi and the Lugii living to their north. The Lugii turned to Diocletian, who sent troops, a hundred-strong cavalry. However, »the Suebi, indignant at his giving help, attached to themselves some lazyges and were making their preparations to cross the Ister with them«<sup>644</sup>. This marked the start of the *Expeditio Suebica et Sarmatica* (sometimes designated as *Expeditio in Sarmatas*), which, as Suetonius notes, was »of necessity«, while »the one against the Sarmatians was justified by the destruction of a legion with its commander«<sup>645</sup>. The legion in question was the *Legio XXI Rapax*, stationed in Brigetio, providing a clue to where these events took place<sup>646</sup>. Domitian's last, 22<sup>nd</sup> imperial acclamation reflected the victory over the lazyges. Suetonius and Eutropius remarked that the emperor only held an *ovatio* at the end of the war and that he »suffered many disasters, however, in these wars, for in Sarmatia one of his legions was cut off together with its captain«<sup>647</sup>. The *ovatio* held

<sup>640</sup> Dio LXVII.7.1.

<sup>641</sup> Strobel 1989, 78.

<sup>642</sup> ILS 9200. Cf. Nemeth 2005, 128-130 n. 42. For the events during Domitian's reign, see Alföldi 1940a, 137-138; 1942a, 184. – Nagy 1973, 89-94. – Mócsy 1974, 82-83, and esp. Patsch 1937, and Strobel 1989.

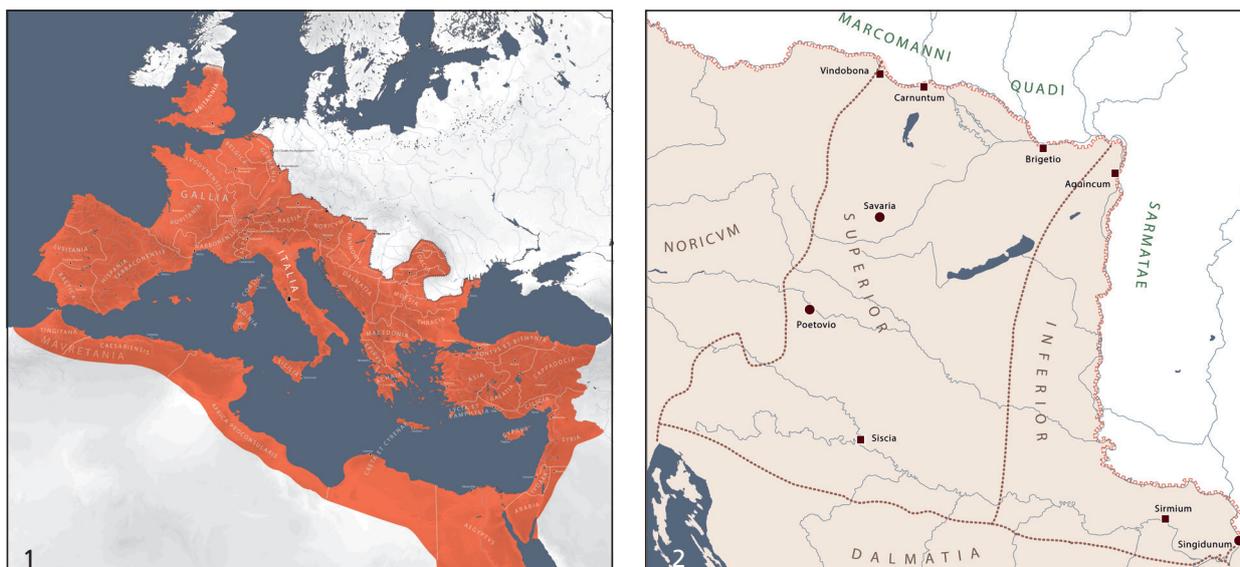
<sup>643</sup> Tacit. *Hist.* I.2.1. – ILS 9200. – Strobel 1989, 87. 96-98.

<sup>644</sup> Dio LXVII.5.

<sup>645</sup> Sueton. *Dom.* 6. – Eutrop. VII.23. – Tacit. *Agr.* 41. – Nagy 1986, 377. – Strobel 1989, 99-100.

<sup>646</sup> Strobel 1989, 99-104. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 36, with a discussion of the events and ample literature.

<sup>647</sup> Eutrop. VII.23. – Sueton. *Dom.* 6. A coin was struck to commemorate the victory over the Sarmatians (Strobel 1989, 102).



**Fig. 164** 1 the Roman Empire in the time of Hadrian with the two Pannonian provinces (after <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moesia> [29.4.2012]). – 2 the division of Pannonia under Trajan with the four Roman legions stationed in the two Pannonian provinces (after Mócsy 1974, fig. 16). – (Maps M. Ober, RGZM)

instead of a *triumphus* is perhaps a reflection of the fact that Rome did not regard the matter as resolved. The defences along the Pannonian frontier were reinforced and the province was divided into two parts, entailing the separation of the legions stationed on the Suebian and Sarmatian frontier (**fig. 164**)<sup>648</sup>. The lazyges were apparently pacified because there is no record of their participation in the Quadic incursion of 97 AD, when hostilities broke out again<sup>649</sup>. A glance at Roman coin finds is again instructive: a regular coin circulation began in the Barbaricum from Domitian's reign onward<sup>650</sup>.

The period of the Dacian Wars marked a turning-point in the history of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin. In order to understand why, we should first take a closer look at the Dacians. Although this issue has been briefly touched upon above, we shall again review the most important points in order to better understand events in the Carpathian Basin during the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

It must be borne in mind that this is an under-researched field of study. Research on the Dacians has been greatly encumbered by the theory of Daco-Romanian continuity, which pushed Dacian studies from the groves of academe into the realm of politics<sup>651</sup>.

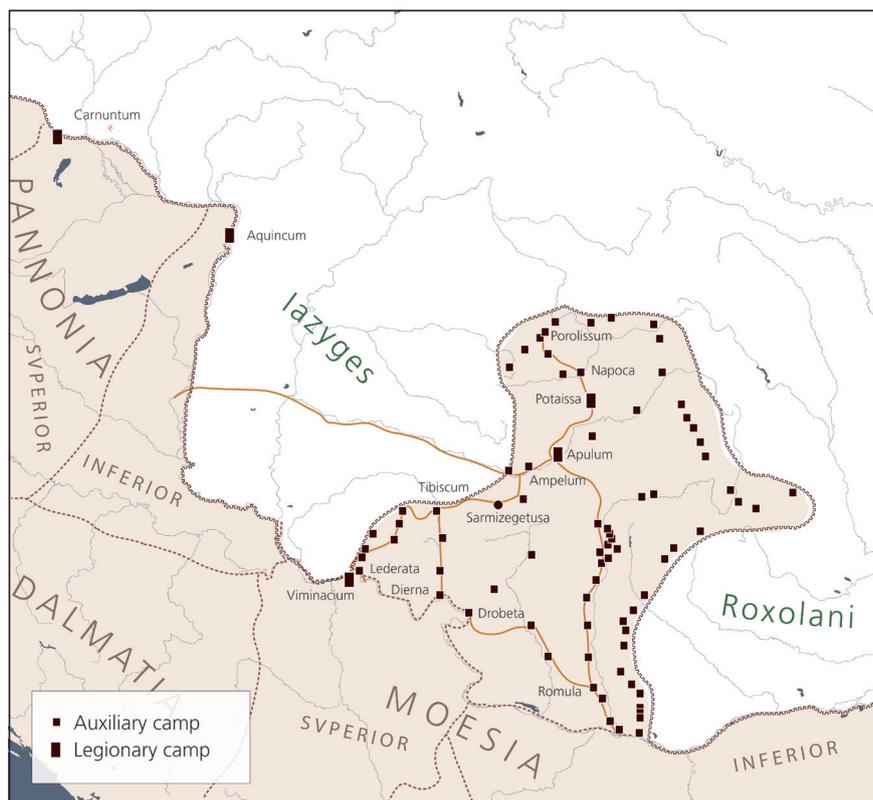
The Dacians were long-standing enemies of the Roman Empire when the Sarmatians first appeared in the region. They had shaken off the Celtic yoke in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, and from the end of the century, the Romans were repeatedly forced to deal with the Dacian raids into Macedonia. In 48 BC, when Caesar and Pompey battled in the Balkans, it seemed that Burebista, the Dacian king, would side with Pompey. He apparently seized the opportunity to take advantage of the general turmoil, vanquished the Boii and conquered their lands. Strabo dated this event to the reign of »Caesar«, and described their land as *Deserta Boiorum* after the defeat of the Boii. Knowing that the last Boian coin imitates a Roman *denarius* type struck in 43 BC and that Caesar had died the year before, the »Caesar« mentioned by Strabo can only be Octa-

<sup>648</sup> See Nagy 1973, 89-94, citing further sources. For the division of the province, see Nagy 1986, 380, according to whom this division was maintained until Nerva's reign, when the original situation was restored. The province was again divided into two parts during Trajan's reign in 106.

<sup>649</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 188.

<sup>650</sup> Fülöp 1976, 253.

<sup>651</sup> For an excellent summary on the birth, reception and political background of the theory of Daco-Romanian continuity, see Alföldi 1941; 1999. – Schramm 1997.



**Fig. 165** Dacia between 106 and 217 AD: **1** imperial border. – **2** provincial border. – **3** road. – **4** auxiliary camp. – **5** legionary camp. – **6** the so-called *limes Transalutanus*. – (After Tóth 1986, map 9; map M. Ober, RGZM).

vian. Dacian power had become a serious threat to Rome. Caesar's planned counter-attack came to nothing after his assassination in 44 BC. However, Burebista's kingdom soon fell apart without the need for Roman interference. He was murdered, the earlier vanquished peoples seceded, and four separate Dacian principalities emerged. Rome nonetheless felt threatened and strove to prevent a possible union between them. In 35 BC, Augustus gained a foothold in Siscia (modern Sisak in Croatia), a good springboard for future operations. The clash with Anthony, however, prevented him from conducting a war against the Dacians<sup>652</sup>. The consolidation of the Dacian situation was a recurring priority in Roman foreign policy ever since Caesar. The showdown with the Dacians was repeatedly delayed until it was finally accomplished by Trajan. Following the *expeditio Sarmatica*, the Iazyges, who had retreated after 92 AD, eagerly seized the opportunity offered by Trajan's Dacian Wars. The Iazyges' enmity toward Rome faded under Trajan. It is possible that there had existed a corridor – perhaps along the Lower Danube – through which the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin maintained contact with their brethren, principally with the Roxolani of the Lower Danube region and, at least as importantly, with the Pontic towns<sup>653</sup>. Decebal's conquests around 103-104 AD involved the annexation of «a portion of the territory of the Iazyges (which Trajan later would not give back to them when they asked for it)». <sup>654</sup> The Dacian ruler apparently sealed the corridor so vital to the Iazyges, in part owing to the virtual lack of raw materials in their new homeland on the Hungarian Plain (fig. 165).

<sup>652</sup> Alföldi 1943a, 9. 11; 1943b, 16.

<sup>653</sup> A late source, Jordanes' already quoted passage, refers to the existence of this corridor. According to the Gothic chronicler (XII.74), the border between the Iazyges and the Sarmatians was marked by the Aluta (Olt). Alföldi 1942a, 188, argued that this can only have referred to the period between Burebista and Decebal's reign. – Mócsy 1977, 441.

<sup>654</sup> Dio LXVIII.10.3. The annexation of the region was cited as the main reason for the gradual decline of the earliest Sarmatian «gold horizon» at the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century because it was assumed that the typical gold artefacts originated from the northern Pontic towns (Vaday 1982/1983). As we have seen, however, the Pontic origin of the articles in question is not beyond doubt; even more importantly, all the securely datable burials can be assigned to the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

Forced to abandon their earlier lifestyle and gradually adopt sedentism, shifting to an economy based on crop cultivation, the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin found themselves in a difficult situation after the loss of their lands along the Danube. For the Sarmatians, Trajan's decision to destroy the threat posed by the growing power of the Dacian kingdom and seize Decebal's enormous riches proffered the hope of a radical change in their fortunes.

Consequently, as Cassius Dio reported, »The senate again declared him an enemy, and Trajan once more conducted the war against him in person«<sup>655</sup>. Trajan could now count on the lazyges as allies, who, as a people, were hostile to the Dacians; they were at this time particularly incensed and were intent on reclaiming their lands. In contrast, the Roxolani in the Lower Danube region were more sensitive to the Roman show of power against the Dacians and thus allied themselves with the Dacians<sup>656</sup>.

One well-attested imprint of the Roman-lazygian alliance in the archaeological record was the first major upswing in the circulation of Roman coins across the entire Sarmatian Barbaricum of the Great Plain (including the territories beyond the Tisza), which can be clearly linked to Trajan's Dacian Wars<sup>657</sup>. It seems likely that the Sarmatians already living in the Carpathian Basin and the groups planning to settle there received, amongst other things, money from their Roman allies. When the lazyges occupied eastern Hungary after the Dacian Wars, they obviously took these coins with them.

The events of the Dacian Wars are depicted on Trajan's column in Rome. Portrayals of the lazyges (**figs 166-170**) and the Roxolani (**fig. 171**) both appear among the reliefs.

Following a long and difficult campaign, the Roman army finally vanquished the Dacians (**fig. 172**). The campaigns against the Dacians ended in late summer 106. A diploma from Porolissum issued on 11 August marks the conclusion of the second Dacian campaign. The head of Decebal, the Dacian king, was displayed on the Gemonia Stairs in Rome, elaborate festivities were held and a series of coins with the legend *DACIA CAPTA* was issued (**fig. 173**). The Empire also acquired a part of the fabulous treasures amassed by the Dacian kings (**fig. 174**)<sup>658</sup>.

Trajan began the organisation of the new province of Dacia. Examining the creation of the new province from a barbarian perspective, two questions have to be addressed: firstly, the status of the Banat (the region ringed by the Maros, the Tisza, the Danube and mountains); and secondly, the fate of the lazygian territory, a portion of which had earlier been annexed by Decebal.



**Fig. 166** lazyges on Trajan's Column in Scene CVIII. – (After Cichorius 1896/1900, no. 289, pl. LXXX).

<sup>655</sup> Dio LXVIII.10.3.

<sup>656</sup> Alföldi 1940a, 138.

<sup>657</sup> Fülöp 1976, 253.

<sup>658</sup> CIL XVI.160. Cf. Balla 1965, 142. – Tóth 2001, 61. – RIC II 96-97.



**Fig. 167** lazyges on Trajan's Column in Scene CVIII no. 289. – (After Cichorius 1896/1900, pl. LXXXI).



**Fig. 168** lazyges on Trajan's Column in Scene LXX no. 177-178. – (After Cichorius 1896/1900, pl. L).



**Fig. 169** lazygian nobles in Scene C no. 262 of Trajan's Column. – (After Cichorius 1896/1900, pl. LXXXIII).

The Romans built two defence lines – two chains of forts – in the Banat (fig. 165). The first, the western outer defence line, ran from the pontoon bridge at Lederata (Bačka Palanka, Serbia) to Tibiscum (Jupa, Romania). The other, the interior line, lay somewhat eastward and began at Dierna (Orşova, Romania). This road joined the former one at Tibiscum<sup>659</sup>. The archaeological record indicates a dense Sarmatian settlement network west of the outer defence line, with a growing intensity from the south-eastern Banat toward the Maros-Tisza angle and the Tisza. The assemblages from the Bačka region (the southern part of the Danube-

<sup>659</sup> Tóth 2001, 69-70 map 9.

**Fig. 170** The earliest reconstructions of the Sarmatian attire of the Carpathian Basin were made by G. Nagy (1900, pl. I, B.1-5). His drawings were based on the depictions of the Trajan's Column and also on the data of the written sources (Tacitus).



**Fig. 171** Roxolani in Scene XXXVII no. 93-94 of Trajan's Column. – (After Cichorius 1896/1900, pl. XXVIII).



Tisza interfluve, whose greater part today lies in Serbia) and the Banat were first surveyed and discussed by Milleker and, after him, by Párducz. Their research has proven conclusively that the region was densely settled by the Sarmatians (fig. 175)<sup>660</sup>. Recent Romanian research has identified 26 Sarmatian sites in the Arad Basin alone: these all lie west of Arad, while the sites to their east have exclusively yielded Dacian material

<sup>660</sup> Milleker 1897; 1899; 1906. – Párducz 1942. – Tóth 2001, 69.



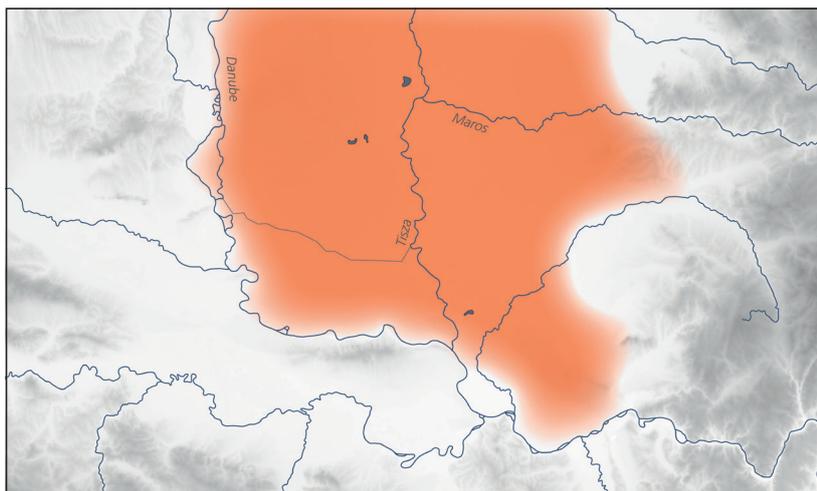
**Fig. 172** Adamclissi, *Tropaeum Traiani*. Defeated Dacian warrior protects himself with a characteristic curved knife. – (After Bobu Florescu 1965, metope XVII).



**Fig. 173** Coin with the legend DAC[IA] CAP[TA] (RIC II 99).



**Fig. 174** From Decebal's treasure triumphators conveyed to the emperor's treasury in Rome 1650 tons of gold and 3300 tons of silver (Makkay 1994, 157-158). Scene CXXXVIII no. 367 of Trajan's Column. – (After Cichorius 1896/1900).



**Fig. 175** Distribution of Sarmatian sites in the Bačka/Bácska and Banat region. – (The Bačka part was drawn on the basis of Dautova-Ruševljan 1990; the Banat part: Grumeza 2014, pl. 103; map M. Ober, RGZM).

and cremation burials. The Sarmatian presence can be confirmed from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century onward, suggesting that the boundary between the two peoples, the Dacians and the Sarmatians, lay to the front of the *limes*. The relations between them are best illustrated by the Dacian vessels found in Sarmatian burials, a far from infrequent phenomenon. The joint occurrence of both Dacian and Sarmatian pottery vessels on various sites, e. g. at Şeitin in Romania, indicates that the region was indeed a contact zone<sup>661</sup>. Moving westward, it is apparent that the Sarmatian settlement of the Bačka was at least as dense. Over 200 sites are known in the Bačka and in Serbian Banat; of these, 60 settlement sites and 44 burial grounds can be found on the left bank of the Tisza<sup>662</sup>. The date of these sites is mostly uncertain due to the lack of systematic research, although there is a general consensus that the Sarmatians' presence can be taken for granted by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. It must in all fairness be added that few sites are known from the Hungarian Plain dating from the period of the creation of the province of Dacia and the Marcomannic Wars (fig. 176).

Despite the dense distribution of Sarmatian (and Dacian) finds, mainstream Romanian research tends to draw the south-western *limes* of Dacia along the Maros-Tisza-Danube line, assuming a *ripa* in the region<sup>663</sup>. One of the main arguments is that a high number of Roman finds, including military ones, are known from the Maros Valley. Several Western European historical atlases have adopted the maps published by Romanian scholars<sup>664</sup>.

However, it has been long-since proven that the western Banat was occupied by the Sarmatians and that the fertile plain between the Olt, the Danube, the Siret and the Carpathians had never been part of the province of Dacia. Numerous Roman finds from the westerly areas of the Maros Valley are not an indication that the area was part of the Empire, but that the road connecting Dacia with Pannonia Inferior led through this region. Several control stations were built along the road as shown by bricks bearing the stamp of the *Legio XIII Gemina* found, for example, at Bulci, Cladova, Sânnicolau Mare and Cenad in Romania. The road branched off from the Tibiscum-Apulium road at the mouth of the Strei and reached the Barbaricum at Micia (Veţel). It has been suggested that the 50 km long section of a 5-6 m wide embankment in the Danube-Tisza

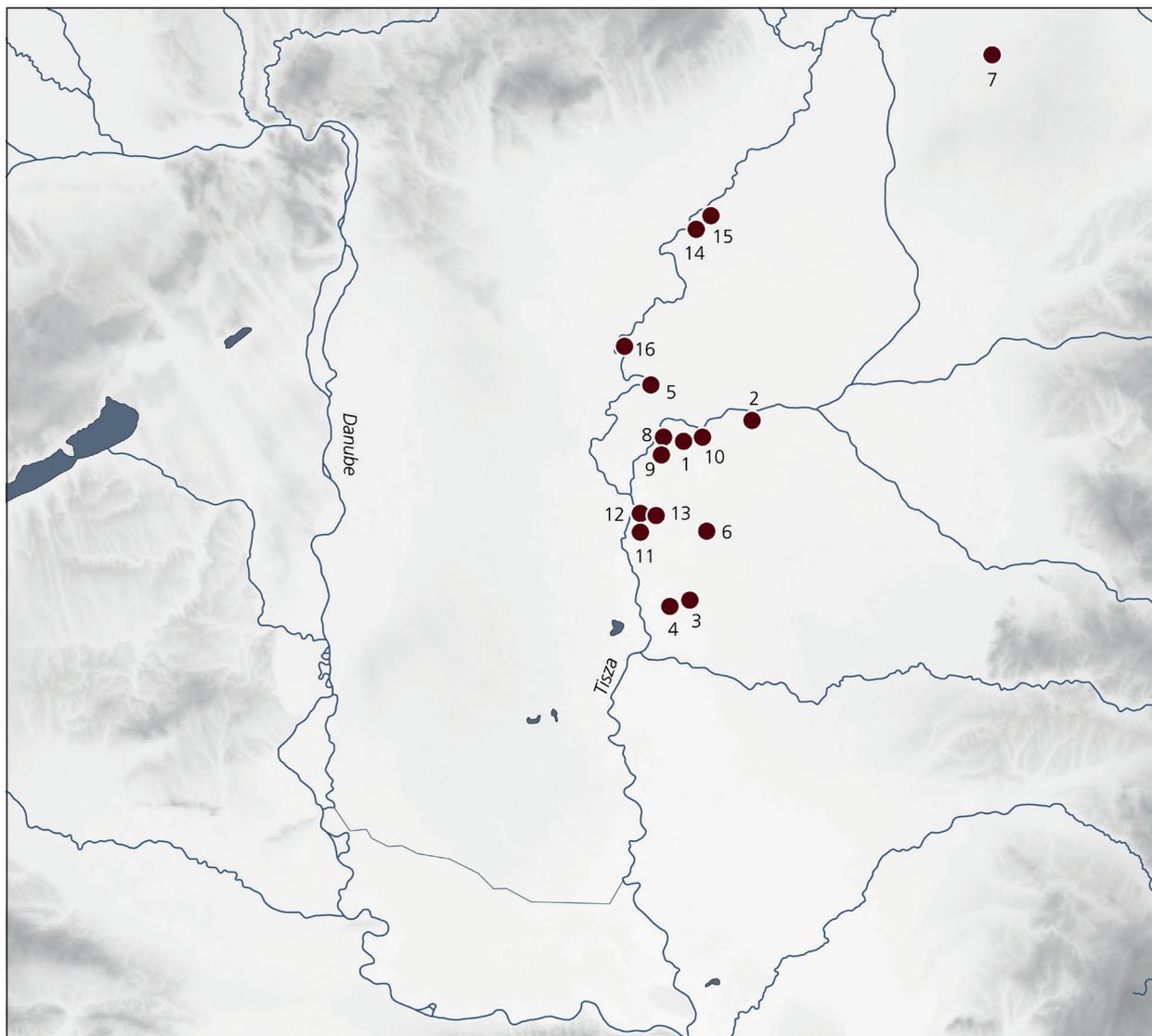
<sup>661</sup> Hügel/Barbu 1997.

<sup>662</sup> Dautova-Ruševljan 1990.

<sup>663</sup> Benea 1999a. – Gudea 2001, 27 fig. 5. In reality Roman military constructions clearly outline the western border of Dacia

Apulensis, e. g. on Gudea's map at fig. 1. For a detailed discussion with extensive literature, see Nemeth 2003, 171-187; 2005.

<sup>664</sup> Benea 1986, 451.



**Fig. 176** Finds from the period preceding the Marcomannic Wars east of the Tisza: **1** Békésszentandrás (after Párducz 1944, 54). – **2** Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Graves 45, 83, 89 (after Vaday/Szóke 1983). – **3** Hódmezővásárhely-Fehértó, Graves 13, 15 (after Párducz 1946/1948, 285). – **4** Hódmezővásárhely-Kakasszék (after Gazdapusztai 1960, 47). – **5** Martfű-Zsófia major (after Vaday 1989b, 256-257). – **6** Nagyszénás-Árpád-halom (after Párducz 1944, 54). – **7** Nyiregyháza-Felsősima (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished). – **8** Öcsöd-Bábocka (after Vaday 1989b, 260). – **9** Öcsöd-Mogyoróshalom, Grave 6 (after Párducz 1931, pl. XIV, 11). – **10** Szarvas, Site 23, Grave 9 (after Havassy 1998, 150). – **11** Szegvár-Oromdűlő (after Istvánovits/Lőrinczy/Pintye 2006). – **12** Szentés-Donát (after Párducz 1941a, 59-60). – **13** Szentés-Kistóke, Graves 104, 127, 142, 145, 147 (after Párducz 1944, 46-47. 50. 52-53). – **14** Tiszaderzs (after Párducz 1944, 54). – **15** Tiszafüred (Vaday 1989b, 274). – **16** Törökszentmiklós (Vaday 1989b, 284). – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

interfluvium represents the remains of this road. If this is indeed the case, the Roman road in question ran from Baja to the Maros mouth (fig. 165)<sup>665</sup>.

The eastern defences of Dacia were similarly made up of two main lines. The inner chain of forts extended along the Olt to the Carpathians. The *limes Alutanus* stretching from the Carpathians to the Lower Danube

<sup>665</sup> Alföldi 1939a; 1940a, 164. – Tóth 2001, 74-75 map 2. For the borders of Dacia and the status of the Banat, see Alföldi 1943a, 64 n. 3, with ample literature; for more recent stud-

ies, also Nemeth 1999/2000; 2005. – Visy 2009. For the road across the Danube-Tisza interfluvium, see Patay/Soproni 1979. – Patay 1980; 2005.

was some 250-260 km long. This line was reinforced with a parallel chain of forts slightly to the east. Known as the *limes Transalutanus*, it was designed to repel the Roxolani. The major crossing places were controlled by counter-forts. The Romans were forced to create a major defence system owing to the presence of the Roxolani in Wallachia. The Moesian frontier was also reinforced as shown by the constructions at Drobeta under Hadrian (fig. 165)<sup>666</sup>.

Returning to the Banat, the region's importance did not only lie in its strategic position in terms of Roman-Sarmatian relations. More recent research has uncovered evidence for large-scale iron-working along the frontier outlined by the Roman military buildings<sup>667</sup>. This is all the more important for Sarmatian studies because we do not know from where the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain acquired their metal artefacts or the raw material for their metalwork. We know that Dacian iron exports were severely limited because iron mining had a long tradition in nearby Moesia Superior and Noricum. One common feature shared by Dacia and the Sarmatian lands of the Hungarian Plain is the virtual lack of any identifiable traded commodities<sup>668</sup>, suggesting that the exports from these regions had either perished or cannot be recognised using archaeological methods. It might be instructive to examine whether the Sarmatians had perhaps exported grain to Dacia (figs 177-178), a region suffering from a scarcity of cereals, for which they received iron in exchange, a commodity that they were deprived of<sup>669</sup>. That the Banat played a major role as an exporter to the Sarmatians is amply reflected by the bead workshop in Tibiscum producing the colourful glass beads so popular among this people (fig. 179)<sup>670</sup>.

The Romans apparently doubted the stability of the situation in the newly-established province because an impressive army of some 30,000 infantry and cavalry was stationed in the province to ensure peace. The presence of such a large army can only be partially justified by the tasks relating to the organisation of the province; the lazygian menace, which principally threatened Dacia<sup>671</sup>, played an equally important role as shown by the re-organisation of the army. As already mentioned, in 106 AD, Pannonia was divided in two: the two provinces received four legions, only one of which was stationed in Aquincum to defend the frontier with the Sarmatians. Aquincum's geographic location suggests that the troops stationed here were entrusted with monitoring any restlessness among both the Quadi and the Sarmatians. While the army in Pannonia was less concerned with the Hungarian Plain, the Dacian army also concentrated on that region. Two legions were transferred as reserves to Singidunum and Viminacium in Moesia Superior, which could be deployed against the Sarmatians if the need arose (fig. 164, 2)<sup>672</sup>.

As mentioned above, Trajan did not return the lands seized by Decebal from the lazyges. This annexed territory is traditionally located in the eastern Banat. Another possibility has been recently suggested, namely, that Trajan had set his sights on the entire territory once under the authority of the vanquished Dacian king. To bolster his theory, Opreanu quoted archaeological data, principally the distribution of gold coins and strongly profiled fantail brooches (*kräftig profilierte Fibeln mit trapezförmigen Fuss*) also produced in the territory of Cluj (fig. 180, 3), and concluded that the borders of Dacia in Trajan's time lay north of the Körös rivers<sup>673</sup> and that this was the territory later evacuated by Hadrian.

<sup>666</sup> Alföldi 1940a, 43. – Balla 1968, 126. – Tóth 2001, 68-71 map 2. – Nemeth 2003.

<sup>667</sup> Ţeicu 1999/2000. – Benea 2002.

<sup>668</sup> Tóth 2001, 80.

<sup>669</sup> In contrast to the common depiction of the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin as nomads, settlement phenomena and archaeological finds demonstrate significant agricultural activity on the Hungarian Plain during the Roman Age.

<sup>670</sup> Benea 1997. Some of the finds are displayed in the Museum of Banat, Timișoara. We are indebted to Prof. Benea for graciously sharing her knowledge with us. For the publication of the workshop, see Benea 2004.

<sup>671</sup> Balla 1968, 113; 1969.

<sup>672</sup> Mócsy 1974, 92-94. – Visy 1994, 90.

<sup>673</sup> Opreanu 1997.



**Fig. 177** The beehive shaped pits and large storage vessels found on settlements from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century onward testify to the Sarmatians' intensive agricultural production: **1. 4** beehive shaped storage pits at Nyíregyháza-Oros (E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished). – **2-3** storage vessels in the collection of the JAM (photo G. Boros).

There is some rationale in assuming that Trajan, blessed with an excellent strategic sense, had set eyes on all his defeated enemy's lands: Decebal's country whose western border lay along the Tisza. Hadrian may have relinquished a part of this territory, namely a portion or all of the region east of Tisza to the barbarians as part of a compromise. This hypothesis certainly calls for further research. While there is ample evidence that Sarmatian finds gradually spread from the Danube-Tisza interfluvium to the territories east of the Tisza,



**Fig. 178** Implements found at settlements testify to Sarmatians' intensive agricultural production: **1** sickles from a pit, Ecser, Site 7, Feature 7242 (D. Mérai's excavation, unpublished). – **2** millstones in a pit, Üllő, Site 9, Feature 308 (V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished).

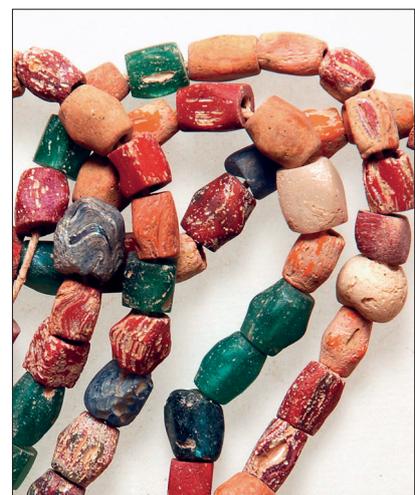
starting from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (**fig. 176**), there is no way of telling whether this occurred under Trajan or Hadrian. Neither can it be ascertained whether this was the consequence of a momentary power vacuum or whether the Romans had intentionally handed over the region east of the Tisza to the Sarmatians. Whichever scenario we accept, there can be no doubt that the eastern Banat was not surrendered to the lazyges by the emperor because this would have meant a wedge of barbarians between Moesia and Dacia, and would have made supplies to the new province uncertain. Even so, Dacia's situation remained precarious. Its only territorial link to the Empire's other Danubian provinces was Oltenia. The »corridor« between the Banat and the Olt connected Dacia with Moesia; at the same time, the new province was separated



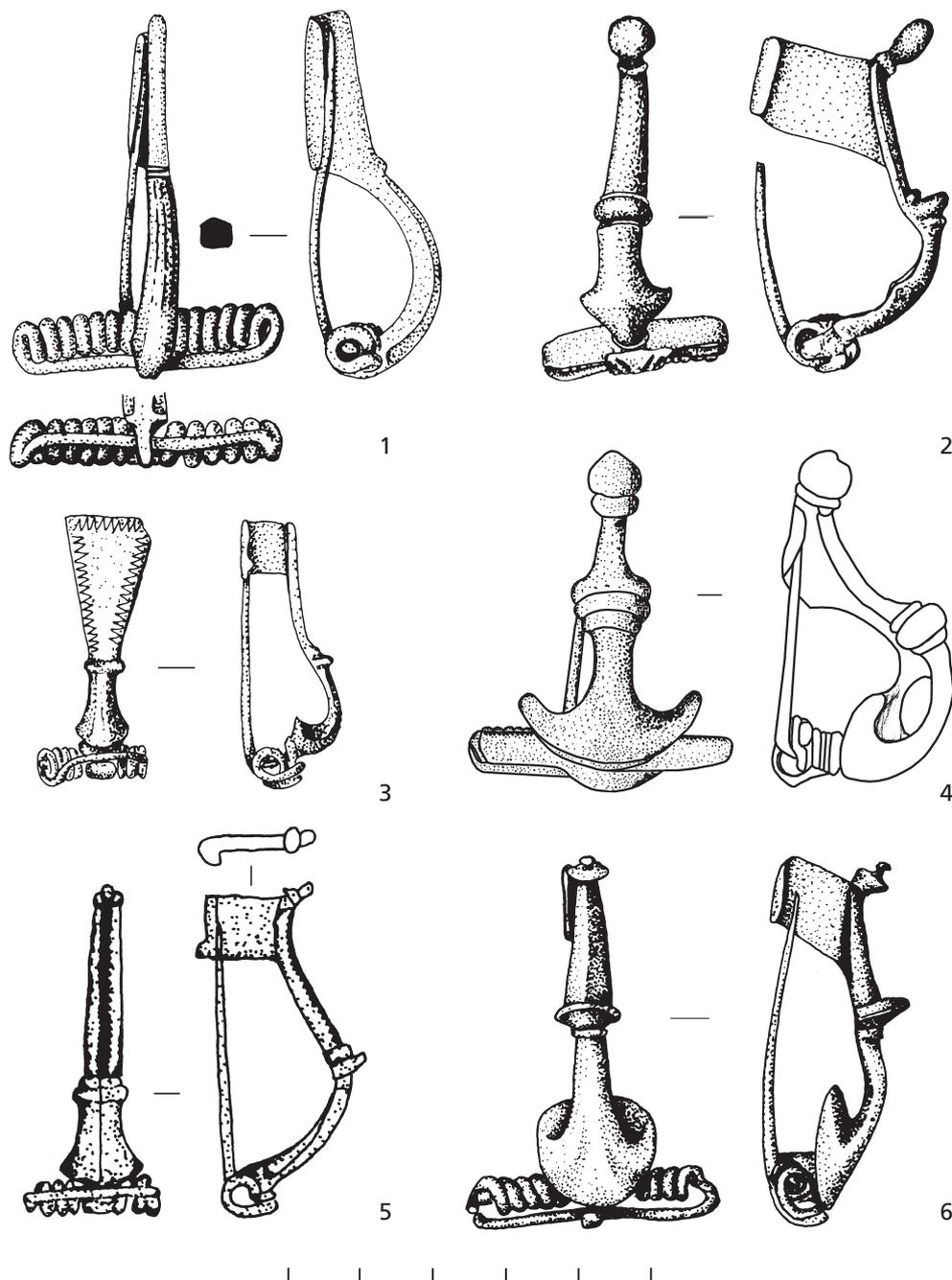
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**Fig. 179** The archaeometric provenance studies and the typological traits of the Sarmatian beads indicated that some had been produced in the bead workshop in Tibiscum (modern Jupa, Romania): **1** characteristic Sarmatian glass beads from the Sződliget-Csörög cemetery (TIM, V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári). – **2** beads from the glass workshop of Tibiscum (Museum of Banat, Timișoara; courtesy of D. Benea / D. Tănase; photo M. Șepețan).



**Fig. 180** Brooch types found in Sarmatian assemblages of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century in the Carpathian Basin: **1** Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 133 (after Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 15, 10). – **2** Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 45 (after Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 6, 1). – **3** Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 83 (after Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 7, 6). – **4** Bag (HNM, Archives, inv. no. 44B1). – **5** Orosháza tanyák, MÁV homokbánya, Grave 5 (after Nagy 2005, fig. 5, 1). – **6** Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 89 (after Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 10, 12).

from Pannonia by the lazyges and from Moesia Inferior by the Roxolani. A new wave of immigrants could easily break through the narrow corridor despite the Roman forts defending it<sup>674</sup>.

The Sarmatians launched their first attack in 107-108 AD. Although the sources recorded that Trajan sent Hadrian, the future emperor, »as a praetorian legate to Lower Pannonia, where he held the Sarmatians in check«<sup>675</sup>, more recent research assumes that the raids probably did not affect Pannonia Inferior inasmuch as they were directed against the western and northern borders of Dacia, at least judging from the troop movements of the Roman army. This attack was repelled fairly easily. Soldiers from Pannonia Inferior also

<sup>674</sup> Patsch 1937, 129-130. – Alföldi 1939a, 534; 1941; 1999, 18. <sup>675</sup> SHA Hadr. III.9.

participated in the counter-attack. By 110 AD, the situation in Dacia had probably become stable, reflected by the many *missiones* (the document received by soldiers when discharged from the army) and the gradual withdrawal of a part of the auxiliary troops between 110 and 117 AD<sup>676</sup>.

Following Trajan's death in 117 AD, the lazyges of the Carpathian Basin and the Roxolani of the Lower Danube region began a series of concerted attacks against Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia. Although it was said that Hadrian »never voluntarily entered upon a war«<sup>677</sup>, he found himself in a grave situation at the very beginning of his reign – he even contemplated the evacuation of the newly-acquired province of Dacia<sup>678</sup>. The province's newly transplanted population was fully aware of the threat posed by the lazyges and Roxolani. The province was a hydracephalous extension of the Empire, to quote Alföldi's apt expression, connected by no more than a slender neck to the other provinces from where it could expect supplies. The military situation of Dacia was rather unstable. The panic gave rise to riots among the province's population<sup>679</sup>. Hadrian's every move reflected the magnitude of the threat: »Then, on hearing of the incursions of the Sarmatians and Roxolani, he sent the troops ahead and set out for Moesia«<sup>680</sup>. Dio also noted that:

Hadrian [...] was afraid that [the new bridge at Drobeta] might also make it easy for the barbarians, once they had overpowered the guard at the bridge, to cross into Moesia, and so he removed the superstructure<sup>681</sup>.

After the Dacian governor, C. Julius Quadratus Bassus, died in the campaign, the emperor appointed Marcius Turbo »to the temporary command of Pannonia and Dacia«<sup>682</sup>. He thoroughly re-organised the defences of Dacia. Similar to the separation of the Quadian and Sarmatian *limes* section in Pannonia<sup>683</sup>, around 118-119 AD there was an effort to create a separate Roxolanian (Dacia Inferior) and lazygian (Dacia Superior) frontier under Marcius Turbo's direction; drawing the necessary conclusions from the war (based on the movements of the Dacians and the Costoboci), a separate province was organised by the name of Dacia Porolissensis (**fig. 181**). At the beginning of Hadrian's rule the military strength of Dacia Superior is estimated at some 25,000 men. An army of roughly 11,000 was quartered in Dacia Porolissensis; the troops included the *ala I Bosporanorum*<sup>684</sup>, transferred at that time from Pannonia, who no doubt had an excellent knowledge of the Sarmatians' battle tactics. The entire Dacian army is estimated at 40,000-50,000 men, while the number of forts was no less than 80. Compared to Trajan's time, the composition of the army changed, with auxiliary troops, such as Palmyrian archers<sup>685</sup>, playing a more important role.

The series of coin hoards distributed from Slovenské Nové Mesto (latest coin: Trajan) through Prešov (latest coin: Hadrian) to Csenger-Halomdomb (latest coin: perhaps Trajan) can perhaps be linked to these events, i. e. the population movements between 117 and 119 AD, which also affected Dacia<sup>686</sup>. If this was indeed the case, the attack was directed against Dacia's north-western border. Simultaneously, the destruction levels from this period identified at Aquincum (Budapest), Campona (Budapest-Nagyttény), Vetus Salina (Adony) and Intercisa (Dunaújváros) reflect the Pannonian incursions of the lazyges<sup>687</sup>.

676 Balla 1968, 113. 115. – Angyal/Balla 1972, 149-151, with the relevant sources and literature.

677 Paus. 1.5.5.

678 Alföldi 1942a, 189. In his analysis of Eutrop. VIII.6.2, Alföldi summarised the debate over this issue.

679 Balla 1981, 123.

680 SHA Hadr. VI.7.

681 Dio LXVIII.13. – Alföldi 1942a, 189-190. – Mócsy 1974, 100. – Balla 1981, 123. – Tóth 2001, 64-65.

682 SHA Hadr. VI.7.

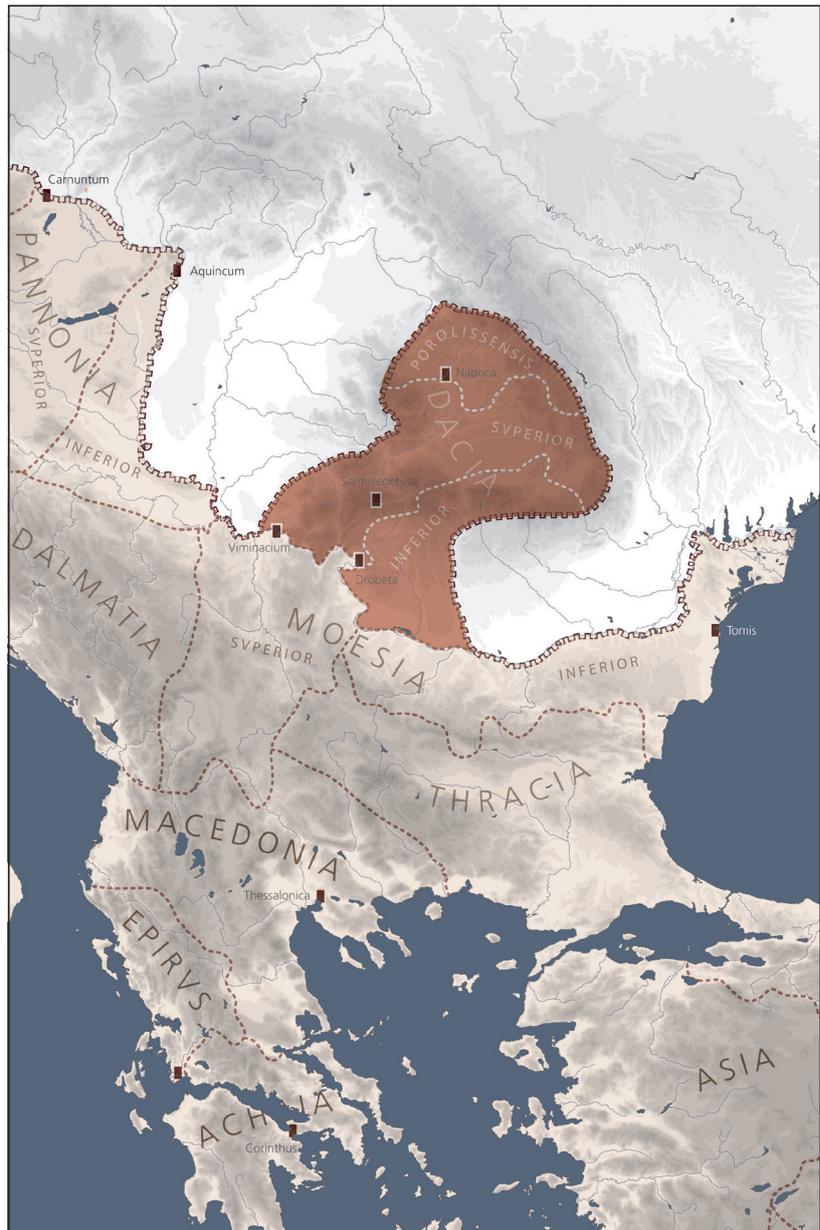
683 Cf. Mócsy 1974, 92-94.

684 Lőrincz 2003, 27.

685 Balla 1965, 143; 1968, 115-117. 121. 125, with further literature. – Tóth 2001, 72.

686 Istvánovits 2002.

687 Barkóczi 1957, 504. – Mócsy 1974, 101, both with further literature. The reconstruction of the events is supported by the coin hoard from Óbuda-Laktanya Street (Budapest) whose closing date is marked by a coin of Hadrian (Jónás 1937).



**Fig. 181** The province of Dacia after its division into three parts in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

The obvious question is how the Sarmatians claiming the territory were pacified. The rebuilding of the military camps in stone, the reinforcement and the re-organisation of the province<sup>688</sup> was accompanied by a rise in the gold subsidy (at least the one paid to the Roxolani)<sup>689</sup>. The re-settlement of the Roxolani to southern Istria may also have been part of the pacification. Two inscriptions from Pola recording that Rasparaganus, King of the Roxolani, had been granted citizenship by Hadrian may be regarded as evidence for this<sup>690</sup>. It seems likely that the first Roxolanian groups moved to the Hungarian Plain by skilfully taking advantage of the turmoil of war and forcing their passage along the Lower Danube<sup>691</sup>. A report from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century

<sup>688</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 504-505.

<sup>689</sup> SHA Hadr. VI.8.

<sup>690</sup> CIL V.32, 33 = ILS 852, 853. – Mócsy 1974, 100 n. 74. – Vaday 1977. Although admitting that there was a lack of conclusive evidence, Alföldi 1940a, 45, believed that the Roxolani had

appeared in the Carpathian Basin after the lazyges, already in Nero's time.

<sup>691</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1997, 162-163. According to Vaday 1989b, 207, the appearance of the Roxolani can be dated after the evacuation of Dacia.

contained a curious fact supporting this hypothesis: after the Sarmatian-Marcomannic war, the Sarmatians were permitted to pass through Dacia under the supervision of the Dacian governor<sup>692</sup>. It is possible that this was a restoration of the earlier *status quo*.

All the Sarmatian groups living in the Danube region were eventually pacified. Their situation hardly changed until the Sarmatian-Marcomannic War, although it must be noted that the region's history from the Dacian Wars to the age of the Tetrarchy was essentially determined by relations between the Romans and the Sarmatians. After the defeat of the Dacians, the Sarmatians became Rome's greatest enemies in the region.

### The Archaeological Finds

Few sites from the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century dating from before the Marcomannic Wars are known from the territory east of Tisza (**fig. 176**). One of the reasons for this is that there are few assemblages that can be confidently dated to this period; and their potential number is greatly limited exactly because the early settlements lacking *terra sigillata* wares and other imports cannot be precisely dated. Thus, paradoxically, any outline of the settlement history of eastern Hungary must by necessity be based on grave finds.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the earliest securely dated Sarmatian find assemblages from the Carpathian Basin are no earlier than the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The literary sources reported that the Sarmatians' occupation of the left bank of the Tisza was well underway by that time. Several inter-related issues have to be addressed in this respect.

#### Sarmatian Occupation of the Territory East of Tisza

Following Trajan's wars, eastern Hungary gradually came under Sarmatian control. Even if this was the outcome of Hadrian's compromise, the situation remains the same and the archaeological finds do not permit a finer chronological distinction. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the earliest Sarmatian finds, the burials of the so-called gold horizon, are known from the Danube-Tisza interfluvium. The Sarmatians' expansion cannot have been particularly rapid. The number of finds dating from the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century known from the left bank of the Tisza, mostly grave assemblages, is fairly low and they are restricted to the river valley (**fig. 176**). Among the few well-dated objects, mainly some variants of strongly profiled brooches – e. g. the fantail ones – can be taken into consideration. These are the finds that mark the left bank expansion of the Sarmatians (**figs 180. 182**)<sup>693</sup>.

The period's burials outline the following broad picture. While the burial rite changed little compared to the burials of the »gold horizon«, gold articles are scarcely found in the graves. It is unclear whether gold artefacts had not been deposited in the burials, or whether their lack is due to grave looting because the greater part of the period's graves were systematically robbed. One recurrent question in Sarmatian studies is whether the graves were looted immediately after the funeral, or whether they were plundered by another population at a later date (**fig. 183**)<sup>694</sup>.

As to the funerary rite, virtually all the elements practised by the Sarmatians during the ensuing three-and-a-half centuries have been identified in the cemeteries of the period. These include the south to north orientation of the deceased, the presence of ditched graves (**fig. 184**), the typical grave-goods (mirrors, spindles,

<sup>692</sup> Alföldi 1939a, 534-535. – Dio LXXII.19.1-2.

<sup>693</sup> Cociş 2004, 58-60. – Vaday 1989b, 76-77.

<sup>694</sup> Kóhegyi 1980; 1994. – Gallina 1999b.



**Fig. 182** Anchor brooch (*Ankerfibel*) from Makó-Igási járandó I. – (After Balogh 2009, figs 81-82, 84).



pottery) and their placement in the grave (e. g. vessels were usually deposited by the feet), the occurrence of inverse orientation, the use of coffins (**fig. 185**), etc<sup>695</sup>.

Brooches were widely worn and beads were popular, too, as shown by the high number of beads found in the region of the neck, arms, waist (**fig. 186**) and feet (**fig. 187**). Obviously, it is very difficult, often downright impossible, to determine whether the beads were used for embroidering the costume and the shoes, or were strung into necklaces and bracelets. It seems likely that a textile band embroidered with beads was worn around the waist. Several reconstructions of the costume worn by the Sarmatian women of the Hungarian Plain have been proposed, which are exclusively based on the archaeological finds. Barbarian women are portrayed extremely schematically in Roman iconography, making these depictions unsuitable for any conclusions regarding either ethnic identity or costume<sup>696</sup>.

Much more is known about men's costume from contemporary depictions, especially from some of the scenes on Trajan's Column in Rome. A comparison of the military events recorded in the sources and the monument's film-like reliefs has enabled the identification of both the Roxolani and the lazyges (**figs 166-171**)<sup>697</sup>. Male burials usually contain fewer finds than female ones. The grave assemblages are made up of a strike-a-light, a piece of flint and various implements, as well as the occasional coin kept in a pouch, a brooch and a buckle. Weapons were rarely deposited in the graves. The period's typical weapon was the ring-pommel sword. A single arrowhead (of the three-winged socketed variety) came to light in Grave 133 of the Endrőd-Szujókereszt cemetery<sup>698</sup> (**fig. 188**). Vessels were frequently placed in men's, women's and children's burials.

There are but few settlements which may have been occupied before the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century. As a matter of fact, this holds true for all the settlements of the Sarmatian Barbaricum in the Carpathian Basin<sup>699</sup>. The sites

<sup>695</sup> Kulcsár 1998a.

<sup>696</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2001, with further literature.

<sup>697</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2001, with further literature.

<sup>698</sup> Vaday/Szóke 1983, fig. 15, 9.

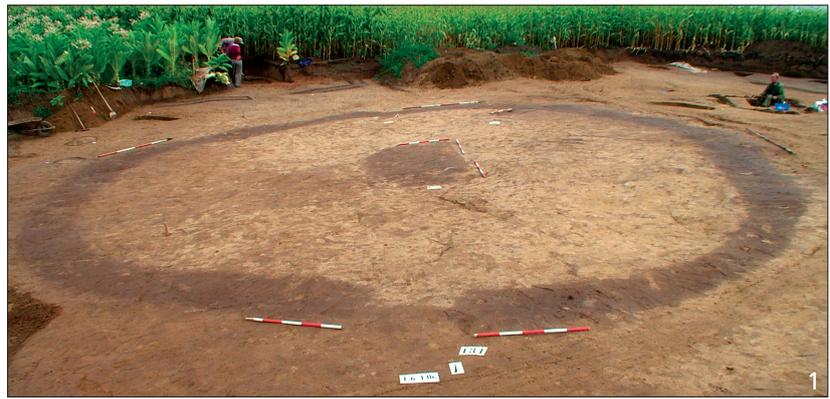
<sup>699</sup> Vaday/Szekeres 2001, 234: »Despite the testimony of the written sources, not one single Sarmatian settlement is known from the period before the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century.«



**Fig. 183** The overwhelming majority of the Sarmatian graves in the Carpathian Basin were looted. Graves plundered in different ways at Nyíregyháza-Felsősíma (E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished): **1-2** longitudinal section of Grave 104, showing the robber's pit; only a handful of bones remained. – **3** the feet survived *in situ* in Grave 1, while the bones of the upper body were jumbled. – **4** Grave 105 was completely plundered.

at Ártánd-Kisfarkas-domb and Nagyfarkas-domb, as well as the settlement at Szegvár-Oromdűlő have been assigned by the publishers to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (fig. 189)<sup>700</sup>. Handmade vessels accounted for a much greater proportion of pottery wares than on later settlements, and the ceramic assemblage also included finds of Dacian and Celtic character.

<sup>700</sup> Nepper 1982, 235. – Istvánovits/Lőrinczy/Pintye 2006.



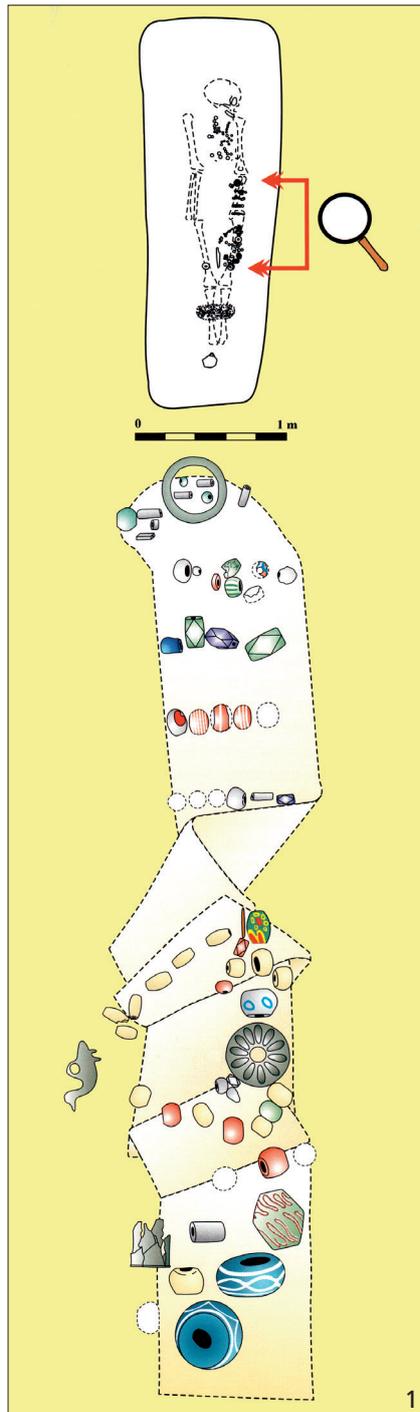
**Fig. 184** Nyíregyháza-Felsősim: **1-2** Grave 130, a burial surrounded with a circular ditch. – **3** Grave 31, a burial with a rectangular ditch. – (E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).

### A New Wave of Immigrants? The Problem of the Tamgas

The occupation of the territory east of the Tisza, the increasing number of finds and the profound changes in the archaeological material suggest the arrival of new groups during this period. The burials in the newly-opened cemeteries contain the occasional articles of the preceding period such as gold torcs, carnelian beads and dress ornaments of sheet gold, reflecting a blend between the earlier group and the newcomers. One singular and unique find must be discussed at somewhat greater length in this respect, for it can provide evidence for possible new arrivals. The find in question is the gold plaque from Dunaharaszti (fig. 190)



**Fig. 185** Coffin remains in the graves excavated at Nyíregyháza-Felsősim: **1-2** Grave 140. – **3** Grave 29. – **4** Grave 252. – (E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).



**Fig. 186** Beaded belts: **1. 3** Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 27 (after Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003c, fig. 12; Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 22). – **2** detail of the belt in Grave 140/2 at Nyíregyháza-Felsősimá (E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).



**Fig. 187** The most characteristic feature of the Sarmatian female costume is the embroidering of the lower hemlines of the trousers and/or of the skirt with beads, in some cases also the shoes. Nyíregyháza-Felsőszima, Grave 311. – (E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).

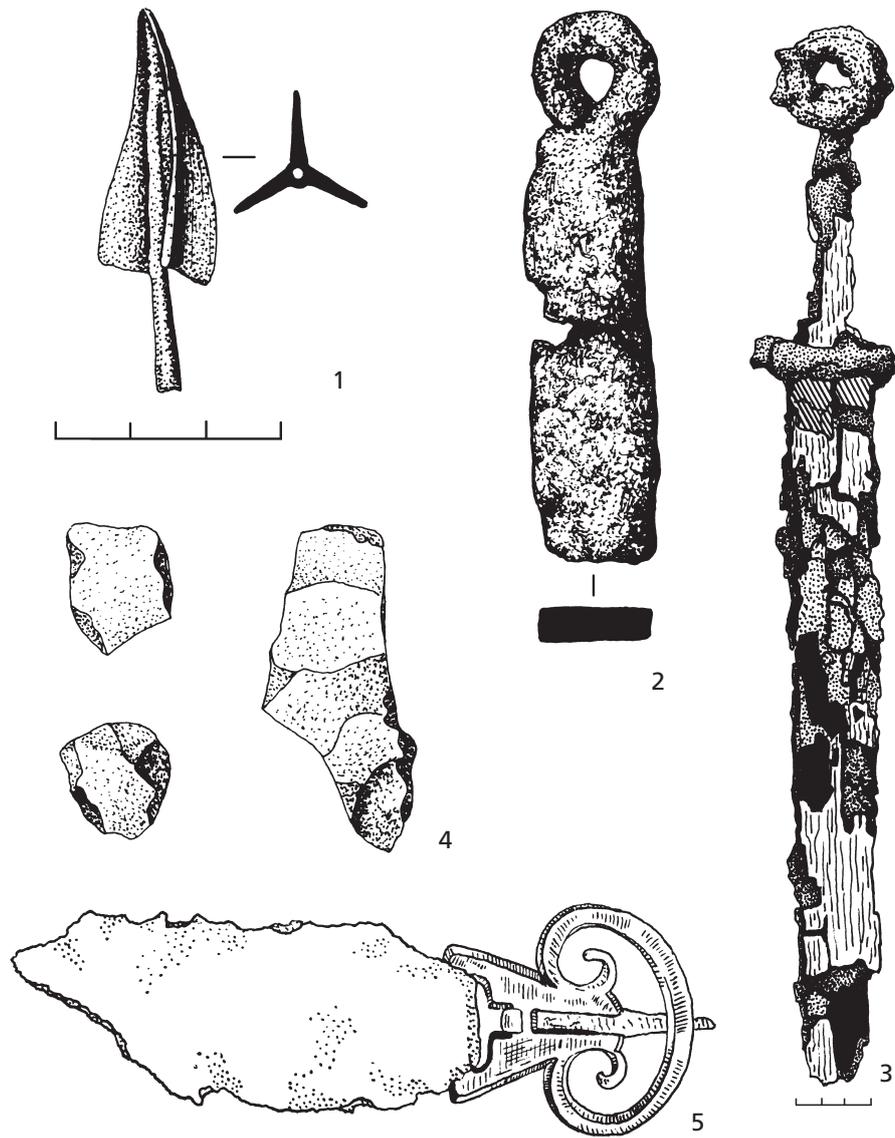
whose uniqueness lies in the tamga sign it bears. The symbol provides a firm basis for determining the date of manufacture and also its origin, as has been convincingly shown by Vaday<sup>701</sup>. A brief digress on tamgas seems in order at this point.

Tamga signs were widely used by Iranian peoples, the Sarmatians amongst them<sup>702</sup>. While the function of these signs remains a controversial and hotly debated issue, it has been hypothesised that tamgas were adopted from the Iranian peoples by other ethnic groups, too. The tradition of tamgas survived for a con-

<sup>701</sup> Vaday 1989a, 134-136.

<sup>702</sup> There is a vast literature on the Sarmatian tamga signs of the steppe. A corpus of the tamga signs was first assembled by Solomonik and Dračuk (Solomonik 1959; Dračuk 1975). In a more recent study, Jacenko 2001 reviewed the current state of

studies on this group of finds and proposed a new classification system and chronological framework. On tamgas in general, see Lebedynsky 2011. For a discussion of the Sarmatian tamgas from the Hungarian Plain, see Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2006b.



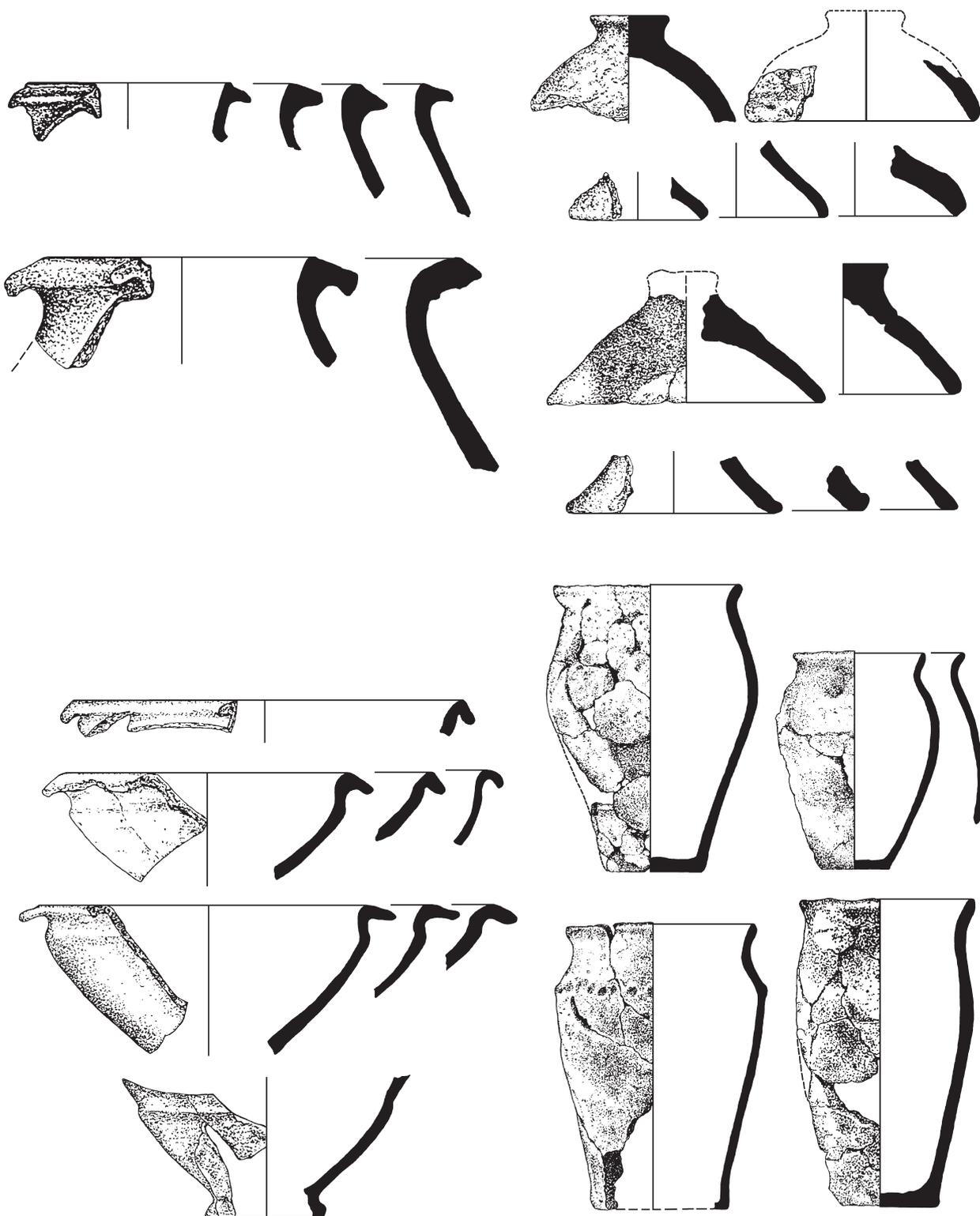
**Fig. 188** Finds of male burials from the period preceding the Marcomannic Wars: **1** arrowhead from Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 133 (after Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 15, 9). – **2** strike-a-light from Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 89 (after Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 10, 11). – **3** ring pommel sword from Újszilvás-Gólyajárás (after Tari 1994, fig. 2, 2). – **4** flints from Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 129 (after Vaday/Szőke 1983, fig. 15, 2-4). – **5** buckle from Csongrád-Endre király utca, Grave 1 (after Párducz 1941a, pl. III, 2).

siderable time<sup>703</sup>. The number of tamgas appearing in the Sarmatian material from the Carpathian Basin is low (**fig. 191**). The study of these signs is particularly important because they can contribute to the reconstruction of the route taken by the Sarmatians (or at least by one wave of immigrants) and the precise date of their migration, and that the tribal affiliation of the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin can be identified based on the steppe distribution of similar signs.

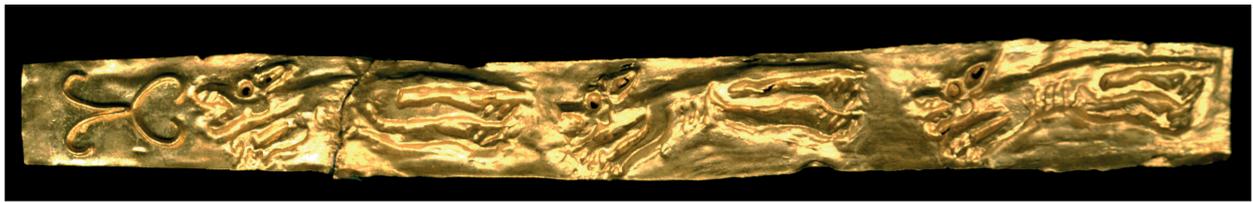
As already mentioned, the use of tamgas remains a debated issue and we shall not review the voluminous literature on this theme. According to the most generally accepted view, tamgas were clan or royal signs, or property marks. Their use in the Pontic was adopted far from the east – from Inner or Central Asia, or from even as far as India through Bactrian mediation<sup>704</sup> – perhaps, as has been argued by some scholars, following the arrival of one or more Alanian tribes<sup>705</sup>. In our opinion, the Alans did not begin their migration from these distant regions, and thus the crucial question is where and how they adopted tamga signs.

<sup>703</sup> Jänichen 1956. – Lebedynsky 1998; 2011.  
<sup>704</sup> Nickel 1973, 167.

<sup>705</sup> Jacenko 1993a, 85-86. – Simonenko/Lobaj 1991, 71.



**Fig. 189** Pottery from one of the earliest Sarmatian settlements. Selection of vessel types from Szegvár-Oromdűlő. – (After Istvánovits/Lőrinczy/Pintye 2006, fig. 31).



**Fig. 190** Gold plaque with tamga sign from Dunaharaszti (Photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).



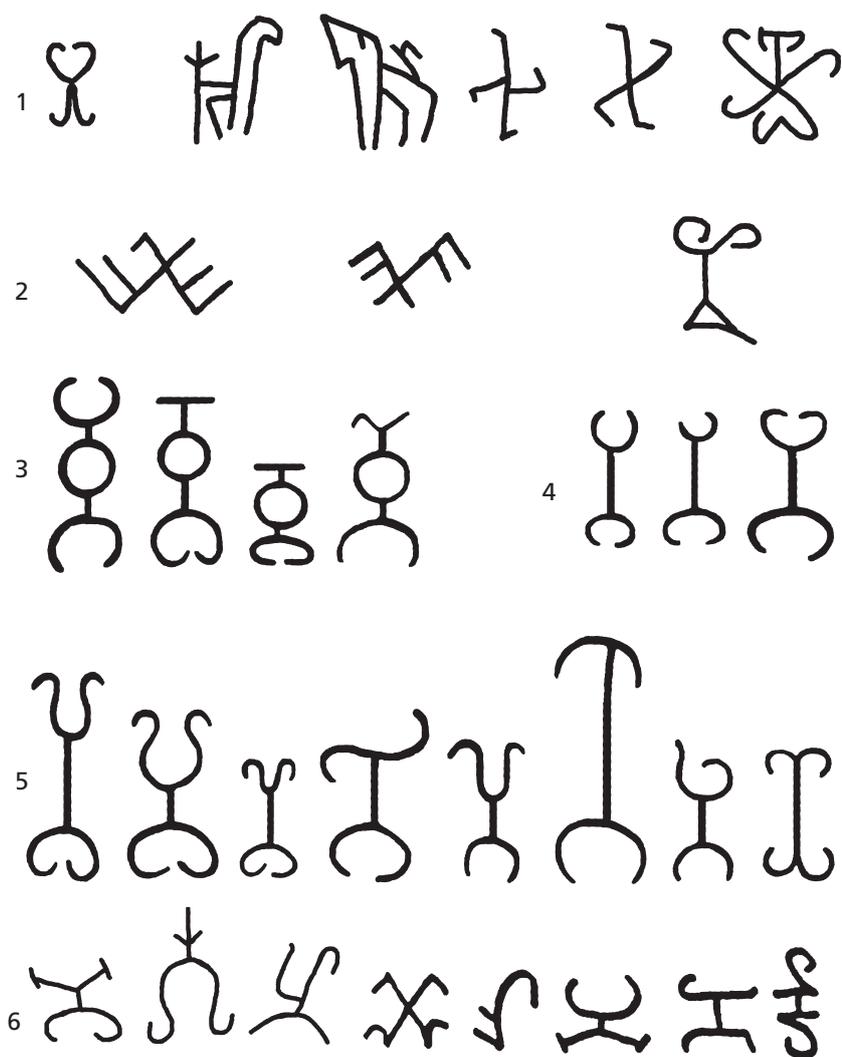
**Fig. 191** Various artefacts bearing tamga signs from the Hungarian Plain: **1** Dunaújváros (after Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003a). – **2** unprovenanced mirror in the Viski Károly Museum, Kalocsa (Photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár). – **3** Csongrád-Határút, Grave 11 (after Vaday/Medgyesi 1993, fig. 15, 1). – **4** Gyula-Szeregyháza (after Vaday/Medgyesi 1993, fig. 4, 4). – **5** Nagyszénás-Vaskapu (after Nagy 2003, fig. 3, 5).

The few artefacts inscribed with tamga signs in the Sarmatian material of the Carpathian Basin (fig. 192, 1-2) are clearly of eastern origin. The following sites yielded artefacts with tamga signs or with signs interpreted as possibly being tamgas: 1) Csongrád-Határút, Grave 11: spindle whorl (fig. 191, 3)<sup>706</sup>; 2) Dunaharaszti: gold plaque (fig. 190)<sup>707</sup>; 3) Dunaújváros/Dunapentele: mirror pendant (fig. 191, 1)<sup>708</sup>; 4) Gyoma-Ailer

<sup>706</sup> Párducz 1944, 56 pl. XXXII, 1a-c. – Vaday/Medgyesi 1993, 63 fig. 15, 1a-e.

<sup>707</sup> Vaday 1989a, 134-136.

<sup>708</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003a.



**Fig. 192** Tamga signs: **1-2** sites in the Hungarian Plain. – **3** tamga signs of Inis-meios. – **4** tamga signs of Pharzoios. – **5-6** parallels to the tamga signs of the Hungarian Plain). – (After Dračuk 1975; (3-4 after Simonenko/Lobaj 1991, figs 32-33).

téglagyár (Site 133), Pit 23: astragalos<sup>709</sup>; 5) Gyula-Szeregyháza: small rectangular vessel (**fig. 191, 4**)<sup>710</sup>; 6) Kovačica: rectangular vessel<sup>711</sup>; 7) Nagyszénás-Vaskapu: spindle whorl (**fig. 191, 5**)<sup>712</sup>; 8) Sarkad-Körös-hát: triangular vessel<sup>713</sup>; 9) Timișoara-Freidorf (Romania): small vessel (**fig. 193**)<sup>714</sup>; 10) Unprovenanced mirror (**fig. 191, 2**)<sup>715</sup>.

The most typical tamga sign from Hungary is the one on the Dunaharaszti plaque. Its outstanding counterpart can be quoted from Porogi, which is usually identified with the sign of the Alanian or Aorsian King Pharzoios (**figs 81; 192, 4**)<sup>716</sup>.

<sup>709</sup> Vaday 1996, 158-159, citing fig. 191, which is missing from the publication. The piece was published by Choyke 1996, 310 fig. 5.

<sup>710</sup> Vaday/Medgyesi 1993, 88 fig. 4, 4 – Jazigok 1998, 164 cat. no. 122.

<sup>711</sup> As a matter of fact, the vessel bears series of depictions and not a tamga sign (Vaday/Medgyesi 1993, 87 fig. 15, 2a-c).

<sup>712</sup> Jazigok 1998, 162 cat. no. 108.

<sup>713</sup> The vessel bears a series of depictions and not a tamga sign (Vaday/Medgyesi 1993, 87 fig. 4, 1-3).

<sup>714</sup> The vessel bears a series of depictions and not a tamga sign (Benea 1999b, 216 fig. 15, 3).

<sup>715</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2006a, 176-177 fig. 2, 1.

<sup>716</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1998, 161 figs 14, 1; 15, 2. 4 (the Porogi tamga). – Simonenko/Lobaj 1991, 62-66.

Similar signs appear on the coins of the Kushan sovereigns (fig. 132)<sup>717</sup>. Another comparable sign occurs on the horse harness of the Kobjakovo elite grave which yielded a diadem. The latter burial is noteworthy because the period's lavishly furnished burials in the Lower Don region outline the region's tribal centre, according to the publishers of a grave from the late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (fig. 92). The Sarmatian tribe occupying the region at the time can only be identified with the Alans<sup>718</sup>. This argument seems acceptable to us. The distribution of artefacts bearing tamgas in addition to the burials with a diadem and the custom of the skull deformation in Central Asia (Tillia Tepe, Kushans), in the Lower Don region (Kobjakovo, Hohlač), in the northern Pontic (Porogi) and in the Carpathian Basin (Dunaharaszti) reflect the settlement territory and cultural contacts of the Alans<sup>719</sup>.

As mentioned, the sign on the Dunaharaszti plaque can be identified with the tamga of the Alanian/Aorsian Pharzoios. This king ruled between 64 and 81 AD and is known to have issued coins in Olbia (fig. 80)<sup>720</sup>. The manufacturing date of the Dunaharaszti plaque can thus be accurately determined. What remains to be established is when it reached the Carpathian Basin. Beside the coins, tamgas of Pharzoios occur on only a few finds, namely, the first and second marble lions from Olbia, the so-called Encyclopaedia limestone slab (fig. 73), the stone column from Zadrost' near Ternopol', a bronze mirror in the National Museum of the History of Ukraine and the *phalera* (?) from Hrușca/Gruška in Moldova<sup>721</sup>. In addition, one could hardly attempt to answer this question if the tamgas of King Inismeios, his successor reigning c. 80 AD, were not known in greater number<sup>722</sup>.

Several Sarmatian artefacts have been brought to light on Dacian *davas*, especially from sites in the Siret Valley (fig. 79). Aside from the tamga-shaped iron bit covered with gold from Ocița and the antler handle bearing a tamga sign from Poiana, the finds in this category include a vessel from Răcătău and the object from Brad, as well as the cauldron from Pietra Șoimului. The origins of other artefacts, such as mirrors, arrowheads and bronze bells, cannot always be established, although it seems reasonable to assume that some were Sarmatian products. The inhumation graves containing finds of this type were most likely early Sarmatian burials because the Dacians cremated their dead during this period<sup>723</sup>.



**Fig. 193** A vessel with series of depictions from Timișoara-Freidorf (permanent exhibition of the Museum of Banat, Timișoara, 2003). – (Photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

<sup>717</sup> Tolstov 1948a, 149 fig. 35. For a good overview of Kushan coinage with excellent illustrations, see Alam 1996. The Kushan sovereigns were portrayed with significantly deformed skulls on their coins, a trait that can be made out on the high quality photographs of the catalogue. This is an important point because the new Sarmatian/Alanian population of the Eurasian Steppe was also familiar with the practice of skull deformation. This is all the more interesting, especially in view of the distribution of tamga signs, because it has recently been suggested that the practice of skull deformation can also be noted among the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin, even

though the skeletal material from the known cemeteries survived in an extremely poor condition (Marcsik 2011, 425-426).

<sup>718</sup> Prohorova/Guguev 1992, 160.

<sup>719</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1998.

<sup>720</sup> Karyškovskij 1982; 1988.

<sup>721</sup> Grosu 1992, 142-143; 1996.

<sup>722</sup> The distribution of his tamga sign was recently mapped by Babeș 1999, fig. 12, who listed Baștečki, Čatalka, Kerč, Snake Island, Ocița, Poiana, Porogi and the Tanais-Carskij kurgan among the main sites.

<sup>723</sup> Harhoiu 1993. – Babeș 1999, 225. 230.

The distribution of artefacts bearing tamga signs reflects an intensive Sarmatian expansion during this period. It is unclear whether this should be interpreted as an extension of political authority or as a genuine migration. Whatever the case, it does not seem too unreasonable to presume that the gold plaque bearing the tamga sign reached Dunaharaszti before the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. In this case, we may assume an Aorsian (or perhaps Alanian) political or ethnic presence in the Carpathian Basin. The tamga sign suggests a royal person. It must be noted that the literary sources make no mention of Aorsi in the Carpathian Basin, neither are there any references to Alans during this early period. In view of the reports contained in the sources, one possible explanation is that the lazyges were part of the Aorsian or Alanian tribal alliance.

Considering the date of Pharzoios's reign, it is also quite certain that the plaque found at Dunaharaszti, as well as the other artefacts bearing a tamga, were not brought to the region by the earliest Sarmatian migrants because they, or at least part of them, had already settled on the Hungarian Plain by 50 AD, at the latest. This apparent contradiction can be resolved by assuming that the mass arrival of the Sarmatians was still underway at the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (or had perhaps occurred at that time).

Another possibility suggested by the artefacts with tamga signs found on Dacian sites, is that the Dunaharaszti plaque or its owner reached the Carpathian Basin in the context of the Dacian Wars or before their outbreak<sup>724</sup>. There can be no doubt about the contacts between the Dacians and the Roxolani in the light of Trajan's campaigns. Material evidence for the alliance is provided by the Sarmatian artefacts recovered from Dacian *davas* and the tamga finds from the Hungarian Plain. The interpretation of the name »Roxolani« would provide one of the missing links if we assume that the Rox-Alans (»white Alans«) can be seen as a reflection of the possible (Alanian) tribal affiliations of Pharzoios and Inismeios.

### **The Inhabitants of the Hungarian Plain Before the Sarmatians' Arrival: Contact Between the Sarmatians and their Neighbours**

One of the most debated issues regarding the history of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin concerns the ethnic affiliation and the archaeological heritage of the local »aborigine« population found in the region. Alföldi claimed that »the overwhelming majority of the Sarmatian material from Hungary contains artefacts partly evolving from local types, suggesting that the population conquered by the Sarmatians outnumbered their conquerors«<sup>725</sup>. Harmatta argued that the Sarmatians depended on the metalworking and pottery skills of the Celts and Dacians<sup>726</sup>. However, the archaeological record is far from unequivocal in this respect.

According to the generally accepted chronological schemes, the Hungarian Plain, judging from the archaeological evidence, was virtually uninhabited from the La Tène D period (1<sup>st</sup> century BC) to the arrival of the Sarmatians. To all appearances, the territory occupied by the Celts had become depopulated by the La Tène D period, with no more than a few smaller settlements and a handful of graves representing the period. This bleak picture can, in part, be attributed to the lack of systematic research, but it can also reflect chronological problems<sup>727</sup>. Be that as it may, at present it would seem that large tracts of the Hungarian Plain remained without a substantial population for a considerable time, which in turn raises the question of why the lazyges, arriving in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, only occupied the Danube-Tisza interfluvium.

<sup>724</sup> That is, the period between the major Roxolanian incursion in 69 AD on the Lower Danube and the Dacian Wars.

<sup>725</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 175.

<sup>726</sup> Harmatta 1970, 45.

<sup>727</sup> Almássy 2009.



1



2

**Fig. 194** 1 kantharos reminding Celtic traditions from Nyíregyháza-Felsősim, Feature 39 (photo G. Boros). – 2 vessel decorated with appliqué decoration considered to be of Dacian character (both JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).

Interestingly enough, there are several instances of Celtic-type finds recovered from Sarmatian contexts<sup>728</sup>. However, the appearance of a single artefact does not necessarily imply the survival of Celtic groups. Celtic influence on Sarmatian crafts should be considered, even if we find ourselves treading on thin ice because the cultural influence from Pannonia can often be derived from Celtic traditions.

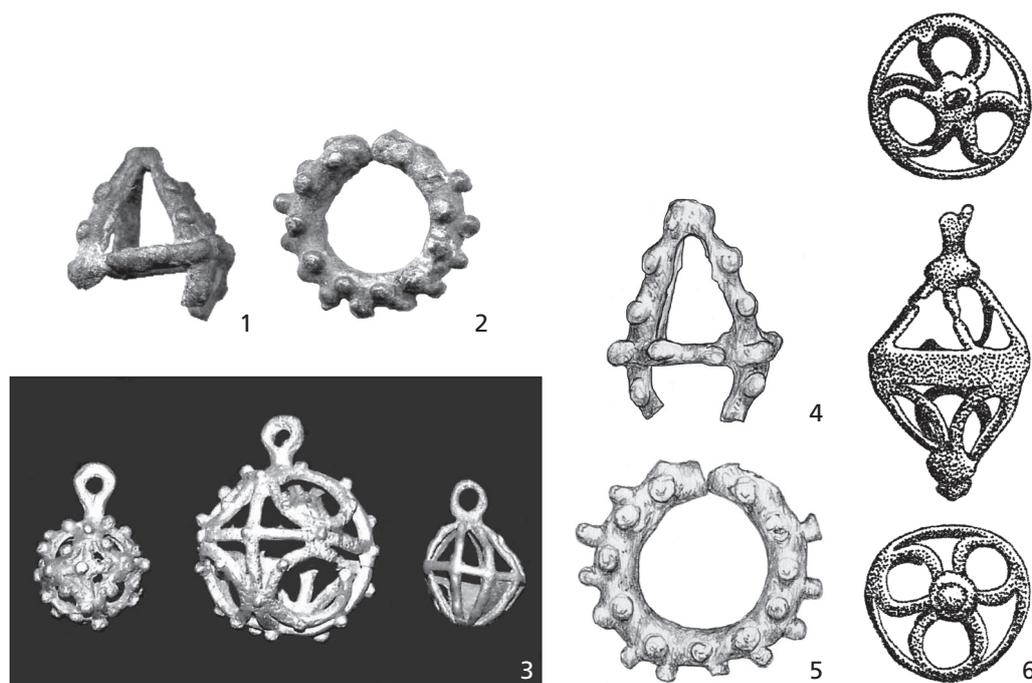
Pottery manufacture is one case in point. There is a consensus that the grey wheel-turned wares enjoying great popularity among the Sarmatians can be derived from Celtic and/or Dacian traditions, either directly, or indirectly through Roman mediation<sup>729</sup>. One problem with this theory is that, with a few notable exceptions, such as the kantharos from Orgovány and similar pieces (fig. 194)<sup>730</sup>, the majority of Sarmatian ceramic wares have no counterparts in either Celtic or Dacian or Roman pottery. At the same time, the best analogies to the ceramics of the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain, regarding both vessel forms and their manufacturing technique, can be found in the Maeotian territory (fig. 52). It is possible that the pottery wheel reached the barbarians of the Danube region from the Greek towns on the Pontic, as it did in the case of the Scythians a few hundred years earlier<sup>731</sup>. Considering the fact that the Sarmatians arrived in the

<sup>728</sup> Párducz 1941a, 66-67; 1952, 39. – Mócsy 1954, 118-119. – Nepper 1982, 236.

<sup>729</sup> Párducz 1941a, 75. – Vaday 1989a, 131-133.

<sup>730</sup> Orgovány: Szabó 1939, 105-106 pl. II, 6 fig. 2, 3; Kiskőrös-Csukástó-Rác-kút, stray find: Párducz 1941a, pl. VIII, 23; Nyíregyháza-Felsősim, Feature 39: Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished.

<sup>731</sup> Kemenczei 2009, 105.



**Fig. 195** Knobbed rings and so-called pocket-microcosm pendants are known from both the Carpathian Basin and the Crimea: **1-2, 4-5** Debrecen-Lovászúg (photo and drawing E. Istvánovits/ V. Kulcsár). – **3** Crimea (temporary exhibition in the Bahçiseraj Museum, 2010; photo E. Istvánovits/ V. Kulcsár). – **6** find assemblage from Madaras-Halmok, Grave 473. – (After Kóhegyi/Vörös 2011, fig. 133, 4).

Carpathian Basin in several successive waves, this possibility is not contradicted by the gradual dominance of wheel-turned wares over the handmade ones. We should not forget that wheel-turned vessels were frequent in contemporaneous Sarmatian burials in the steppe.

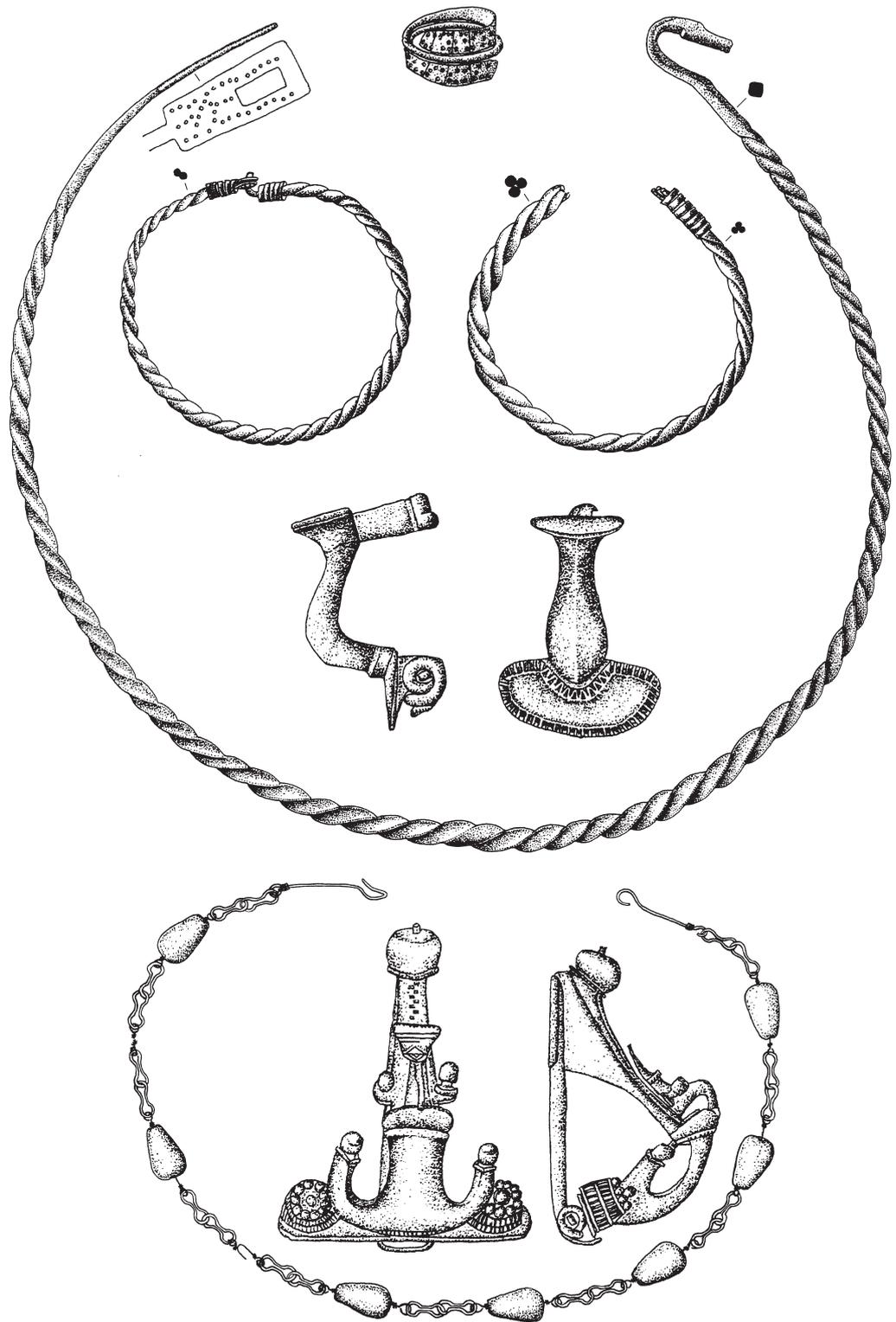
As with his research on pottery that demonstrated Celtic and Dacian influence (fig 194), Párducz was the first to examine the Sarmatians' metalwork from this perspective<sup>732</sup>. He studied the development of certain brooch types, in particular. A more detailed examination of this issue would merit a separate volume, especially in view of the finds brought to light during the past fifty years. In addition to brooches, the possible Celtic ancestry of torcs has also been suggested. The La Tène counterparts of the so-called knobbed rings (*Ösenanhänger*) (fig. 195) and certain knife types also fall into this category. The lack of systematic research in the case of the former objects must again be mentioned: similar finger-rings, knobbed bracelets and so-called pocket-microcosms (pendants adorned with knobs) are well-represented in the Late Scythian assemblages from the Crimea<sup>733</sup>, the very cultural province with which the Sarmatian assemblages of Hungary have demonstrable links<sup>734</sup>. It thus seems more realistic to derive this artefact type from that region and to enlarge the range of artefact types brought by the Sarmatians from the steppe than to assume a Celtic origin.

Even a cursory glance at the archaeological finds dating from the time of the Dacian Wars and the previous period brought to light on the Hungarian Plain reveals the paradoxical situation that there are no 1<sup>st</sup> century AD finds that can be assigned securely to the Dacians. The earliest finds of this type appear after the wars, during the period in which the Dacians lost control over this region. Grave 31, a female burial of the Mezőkövesd-Patakra járó-dűlő Sarmatian cemetery, contained a jewellery set made up of a Dacian torc,

<sup>732</sup> Párducz 1944, 70-72.

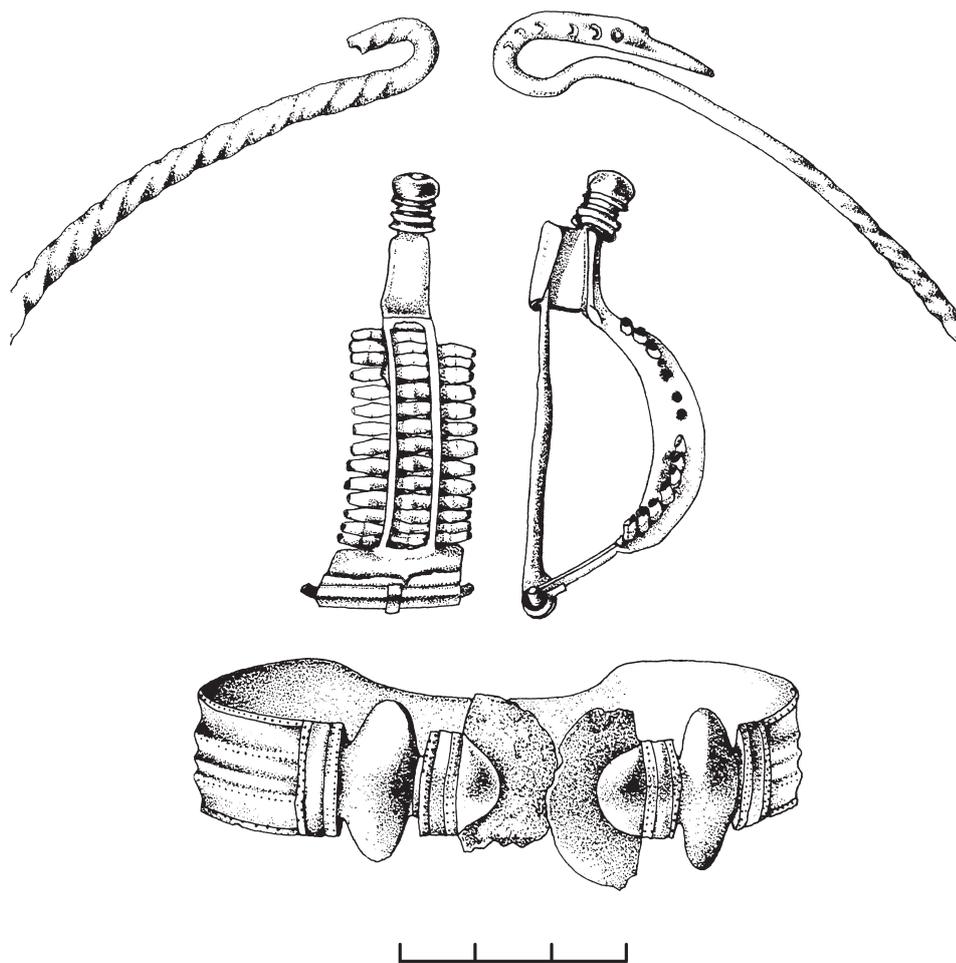
<sup>733</sup> Puzdrovskij 2007, 162 figs 114, 27; 144, 29-30.

<sup>734</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2011.



**Fig. 196** Mezőkövesd-Patakra járó-dűlő, Grave 31. – (After Patay 2003, figs 1-2).

a bracelet and a finger-ring (**fig. 196**). The woman buried in the grave uncovered at Veresegyháza also wore pieces of Dacian jewellery (**fig. 197**). These items can be securely dated to the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries and the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century by their analogies and the brooches found with them. The burial rite indicates that both graves contained the burial of a high-ranking woman. The other finds – a Roman



**Fig. 197** The Roman brooch, Dacian torc and Germanic bracelet of the woman buried according to the Sarmatian rite at Vere-segyháza. – (After Mesterházy 1986, figs 2-4).

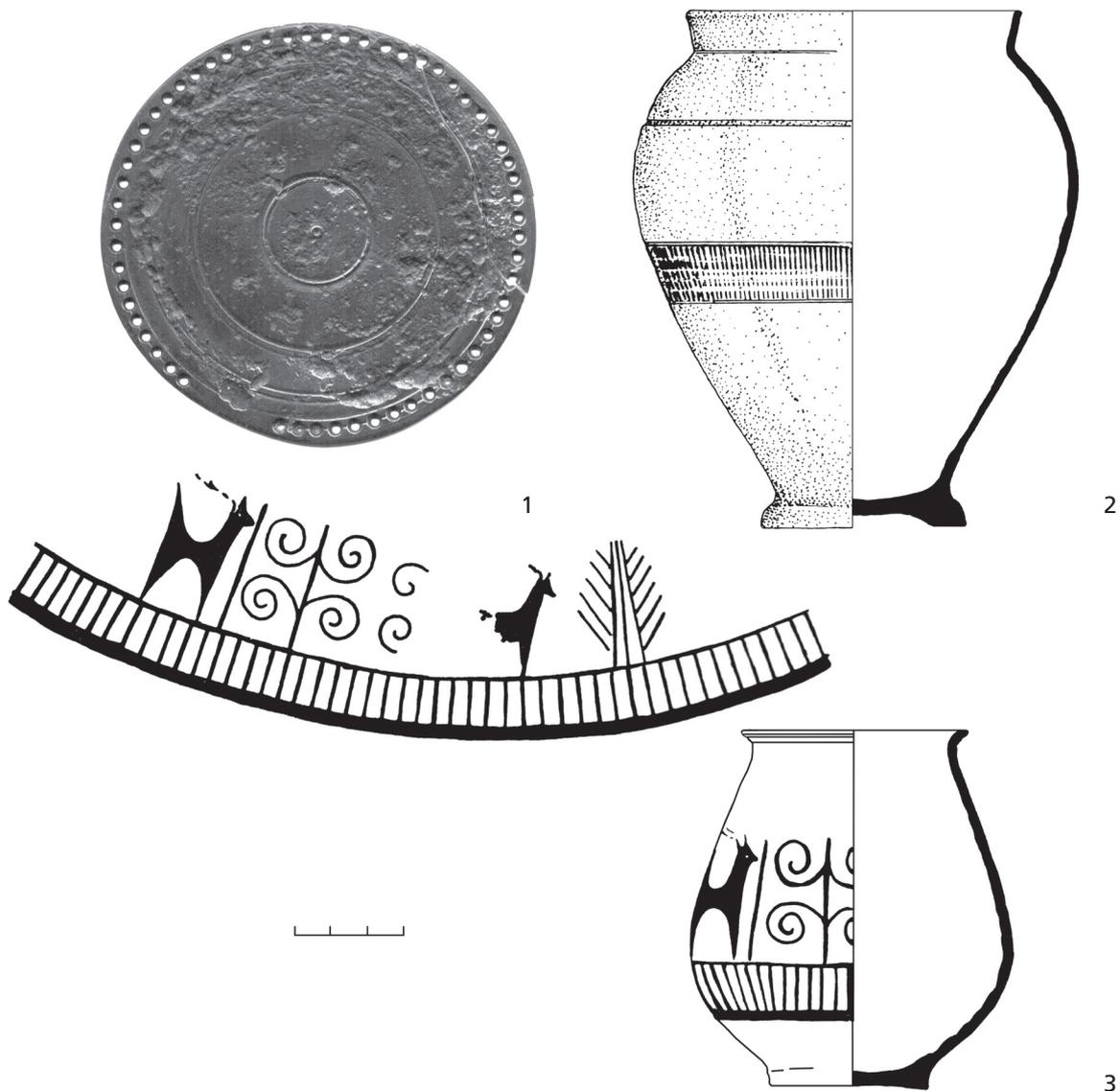
necklace and brooch, a bracelet from the Vistula region and a Dalmatian brooch – reflect contact with distant regions<sup>735</sup>.

Returning to the finds with a Dacian flavour, the pieces mentioned above were without doubt recovered from Sarmatian graves. Not one single Dacian grave – which, in view of the period's Transylvanian cemetery sites, should be a cremation burial – has yet been found in the Hungarian Plain. Vaday explained the lack of »pure« Dacian finds by assuming that the Dacians had not actually occupied the region and that Decebal merely extended his political authority to the Tisza<sup>736</sup>. It is possible that the Dacian control did not involve the settlement of Dacian groups, but even in this case we would be justified in assuming the presence of military troops, otherwise the political control over the Celts could hardly have been maintained. However, no traces of a military occupation have yet been identified.

Other than the researches of Párducz and Visy, there has been no systematic study of the Dacian finds of the Sarmatian period, even though the occasional pottery fragment associable with Dacians has come to light from Sarmatian settlements of the Roman period. The main reason for the lack of research in this field is that it is difficult to identify clearly a distinct category of ceramic wares in the material comprising handmade,

<sup>735</sup> Mesterházy 1986. – Patay 2003. The fragment of a torc resembling the pieces from Mezőkövesd and Vere-segyháza came to light on the outskirts of Orgovány, see Szabó 1939, pl. III, 9.

<sup>736</sup> Vaday 1990/1991.



**Fig. 198** Mirrors with perforated edge and Roman vessels, most dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century: **1** Orosháza tanyák, MÁV homokbánya, Grave 17 (photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár). – **2** Endrőd-Szujókereszt, Grave 88 (after Vaday/Szóke 1983, fig. 9, 7). – **3** Debrecen-Hortobágyhid (after Maróti/Vaday 1980, pl. I, 2).

coarse pottery. It has been suggested that a part of this pottery can be linked to the Dacians. In contrast, a possible Dacian origin is rarely proposed for wheel-turned wares<sup>737</sup>.

The period's find assemblages contain various Roman artefacts, most of which were imported through incipient trading: figural painted vessels<sup>738</sup>; Pompeii-red-painted bowls; amphorae; and, predominantly, brooches generally recovered from burials. As mentioned above, strongly profiled brooches, especially the anchor (*Ankerfibel*) and fantail varieties, can be assigned to this category. The assemblages in question

<sup>737</sup> Párducz 1941a, 63-66. – Visy 1970. The greater part of the material at their disposal was unsuitable for a finer analysis, while the enormous number of Sarmatian find assemblages recovered during more recent excavations has not been analysed from this perspective.

<sup>738</sup> Maróti/Vaday 1980. The distribution of red painted figural vessels in the Barbaricum reflects the gradual early expansion. In addition to the pieces from Szolnok and Szeged, the third vessel from Debrecen marks the site of an advance post.



**Fig. 199** Bronze statue of Victory from Akasztó-Döbrögepuszta. – (Courtesy of the HNM; photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

can be dated by these imports<sup>739</sup>. Other imported articles include Roman mirrors with perforated edges<sup>740</sup> (figs 180. 182. 198).

Some of the Roman articles found in the Barbaricum were not acquired through trade. The most remarkable among these finds is a bronze statue portraying Victory, found together with Sarmatian and Roman sherds at Akasztó-Döbrögepuszta, which probably reached the area during Domitian's campaigns (fig. 199)<sup>741</sup>. Similarly, the fragment of Roman ceremonial armour from the late 1<sup>st</sup>-early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD discovered at Orgovány and the *patera* handle from Jászszentlászló from the same period were hardly commercial items (fig. 200)<sup>742</sup>.

In sum, we may say that the archaeological evidence reflects the gradual expansion of the Sarmatian settlement territory to the left bank of the Tisza after Trajan's Dacian Wars. The number of finds increased, even if not dramatically, suggesting the arrival of new population groups from the steppe, some of which can per-

<sup>739</sup> Vaday 1989b, 76-78.

<sup>740</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1993a, 14.

<sup>741</sup> Thomas 1972.

<sup>742</sup> Thomas 1976a; 1976b.



**Fig. 200** 1 patera handle from Jászszentlászló (after Thomas 1976b, fig. 1). – 2 fragment of a Roman ceremonial armour from Orgovány (after Thomas 1976a, fig. 2).

haps be identified with the Roxolani in view of the tamga signs. The material culture of the new immigrants shows close ties with the so-called Late Scythian culture of the Crimea. Due to the lack of archaeological finds little can be said about the local Dacian and Celtic population of the freshly occupied territories; at the same time, there is ample evidence for trade with the neighbouring Roman provinces from the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD onward.

## FROM THE DACIAN WARS TO THE MARCOMANNIC-SARMATIAN WARS

### Prelude to the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars

The 120s AD marked a period of peace in the Barbaricum. Although there were a few minor Sarmatian forays into the provinces between 129 and 137 AD, these did not have a major effect. Little is known about these local skirmishes: a few coins and a destruction level in Aquincum<sup>743</sup> are all that indicate these events. The hoard of 563 coins from Óbuda must be mentioned – the latest coins date from the reign of Hadrian (123-128/129 AD)<sup>744</sup>.

The relative peacefulness is reflected by the fact that some military units were withdrawn from the Danubian provinces at the time of the Bar Kochba Revolt in 132-136 AD and dispatched to the Near East. Had the Romans perceived any unrest, they would hardly have sent these troops to a distant province. There is also some indirect evidence for the respite: L. Aelius Caesar served as the joint governor of both Pannonian provinces. The administration of a province was usually concentrated in one hand if the Romans were preparing for or feared a concerted attack. Following the governor's death in 138 AD, this precaution was no longer deemed necessary and the administration of Pannonia Inferior and Superior was again separated<sup>745</sup>.

A new wave of Quadic incursions began at the end of Hadrian's reign (137-138 AD). The lazyges joined the offensive at the frontier of Pannonia Inferior. It is possible that Rome's barbarian neighbours simply seized a tempting situation after learning of the troops' withdrawal or the governor's death. The hoard discovered at Nagyrév reflects the instability in the Sarmatian hinterland<sup>746</sup>. The unrest spread along the borders of Dacia Inferior and Moesia Inferior, too. At the same time, in 137 AD, the south-eastern areas of Dacia were threatened by the Roxolani. The lazygian envoys travelling to Rome »to confirm the peace« perhaps marked the end of these skirmishes, around the end of Hadrian's reign or after Antoninus Pius' ascension<sup>747</sup>.

It is uncertain whether the military diplomas issued around 140 AD and the *sestertii* bearing the legend REX QUADIS DATUS (fig. 201) issued by Antoninus Pius<sup>748</sup>, reflecting the Quadic acceptance of Roman authority (i. e. the rule of a king appointed by the Empire), should be seen as the protraction of these incursions or the end of new hostilities after a brief peace. The finds from Dacia suggest that the next raids took place in 143, when an attack was launched by the Costoboci. The new incursions were launched from this region

<sup>743</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 506.

<sup>744</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 504. 506. – Jónás 1937. Coins are not always a reliable means of dating because they often remained in circulation for a long period of time. This circumstance must always be taken into account in the case of hoards, esp. in the Barbaricum.

<sup>745</sup> Balla 1965, 144. – Mócsy 1974, 102-103.

<sup>746</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 506. – Jónás 1924/1925. The hoard was concealed after 133 AD.

<sup>747</sup> Dio LXIX.15.2. See also Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 37. A Sarmatian delegation to Rome was hardly an unusual event, at least judging from the letters of Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* X.23-25), which mention that on their way to Rome, the Sarmatian envoys passed through Bithynia of which he acted as the legate. The Sarmatians mentioned in these passages were obviously not from the Carpathian Basin.

<sup>748</sup> RIC III. 20.



**Fig. 201** Sestertius bearing the legend REX QUADIS DATUS issued by Antoninus Pius (RIC III 620).

and reached the borders of Dacia Inferior by 144/145. Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain and Quadi joined the Costoboci. In sum, the period between 137 and 144/146 was marked by intermittent hostilities and renewed conflict across the entire Barbaricum in the Danube region, followed by a brief, roughly ten-year period of peace that lasted until the mid-150s<sup>749</sup>.

The relative peace in the area between Pannonia Superior and Dacia during the 150s AD was a period of deceptive calm before the next large tempest. Tension increased from year to year, perhaps fuelled by the arrival of the peoples dislodged by the Goths in the north-eastern corner of the Carpathian Basin. Armed conflict first broke out along the northern and eastern borders of Dacia, in the Upper Tisza region and in the territory of the Costoboci, the free Dacians living east of the Carpathians. The first battles were probably fought in 154. The situation worsened by 156, with the free Dacians repeatedly attacking Dacia and making deep forays into the province between 156 and 158, during the governorship of Statius Priscus. Balla set up the following sequence for the incursions: Dacia Superior, 13 December 157; Dacia Superior, 8 July 158; Dacia Porolissensis, 27 September 158; Moesia Inferior, 157 or 158; Moesia Superior, 159-160; Pannonia Inferior, 27 December 159-160<sup>750</sup>. Their route is marked by the coin hoards along the river Someşul Mic, and in the Târnava Mică and Târnava Mare Valleys. The defences of Dacia Superior had to be reinforced yet again<sup>751</sup>.

The situation in the Upper Tisza region – and, at the same time, in the Barbaricum of the Carpathian Basin – had undergone a major change during this period. The earliest finds of the Przeworsk culture in the Carpathian Ukraine can be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (stage B1), indicating that contact between the Germanic peoples and the region's probably Dacian population had been established at a relatively early date<sup>752</sup>. However, the overwhelming majority of the Przeworsk assemblages from the Upper Tisza region can be dated to stage C1, the time of the Marcomannic Wars (**fig. 202**), i. e. to the very period when the written sources reported the arrival of various Vandal tribes, namely the Victovali, the Hasdingi and the Lacringi, along Dacia's north-western periphery<sup>753</sup>.

A new find horizon can thus be distinguished in the Upper Tisza region in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, partly comprised of the second wave of the Przeworsk culture (sites Kékce, Tizsakanyár, Vásárosnamény-Hajnal Street), and partly of the heritage of the Sarmatians, who occupied this region in great numbers at this

<sup>749</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 190. – Noll 1954, 50-52. – Balla 1965, 144. – Mócsy 1974, 103.

<sup>750</sup> Balla 1965, 146.

<sup>751</sup> Balla 1965, 145. – Mócsy 1974, 103.

<sup>752</sup> Kobály 1997-1998.

<sup>753</sup> Dio LXXI.12. – SHA Marc. Ant. XXII. The relevant passages and its problems, with the earlier literature, are discussed by Alföldi 1942a, n. 216. – Schmidt 1942, 6-8. – Bóna 1986, 61-63. – Godłowski 1993. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1993b. – Kobály 1997-1998.



**Fig. 202** Typical grave assemblage of the Przeworsk culture from Kékcsé (Upper Tisza region). – (JAM; photo G. Boros).

time, according to the current evidence (**fig. 203**)<sup>754</sup>. The Sarmatians advanced north-eastwards in the Upper Tisza region and towards the River Ier in the south, reaching the Carei area<sup>755</sup>. It seems likely that the Carpathian Barrows Culture, identified with the free Dacians, also made its appearance in the Carpathian Ukraine during this period (**fig. 204**)<sup>756</sup>.

The number of Sarmatian assemblages of the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century on the Hungarian Plain is relatively low. The striking increase in the number of settlements and burial grounds during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century cannot be explained by a natural demographic growth. This in itself indicates that the new immigrants arriving in the Carpathian Basin in successive waves also included a new, relatively large Sarmatian population. The fresh elements in the material culture certainly confirm this<sup>757</sup>.

Considering the allowances that must be made for the time-lag between the production, use and deposition of various artefacts, the question arises whether the new find horizon should be linked to the military events, or the events of the preceding period, or those of the ensuing period.

Returning to the state of affairs in the 150s, the coin hoards concealed in Pannonia and the neighbouring territories – Bonyhád, Szemely, Bara Osatina, Zalahosszúfalú, Poetovio, Trögern (**fig. 205**) – reflect a dimin-

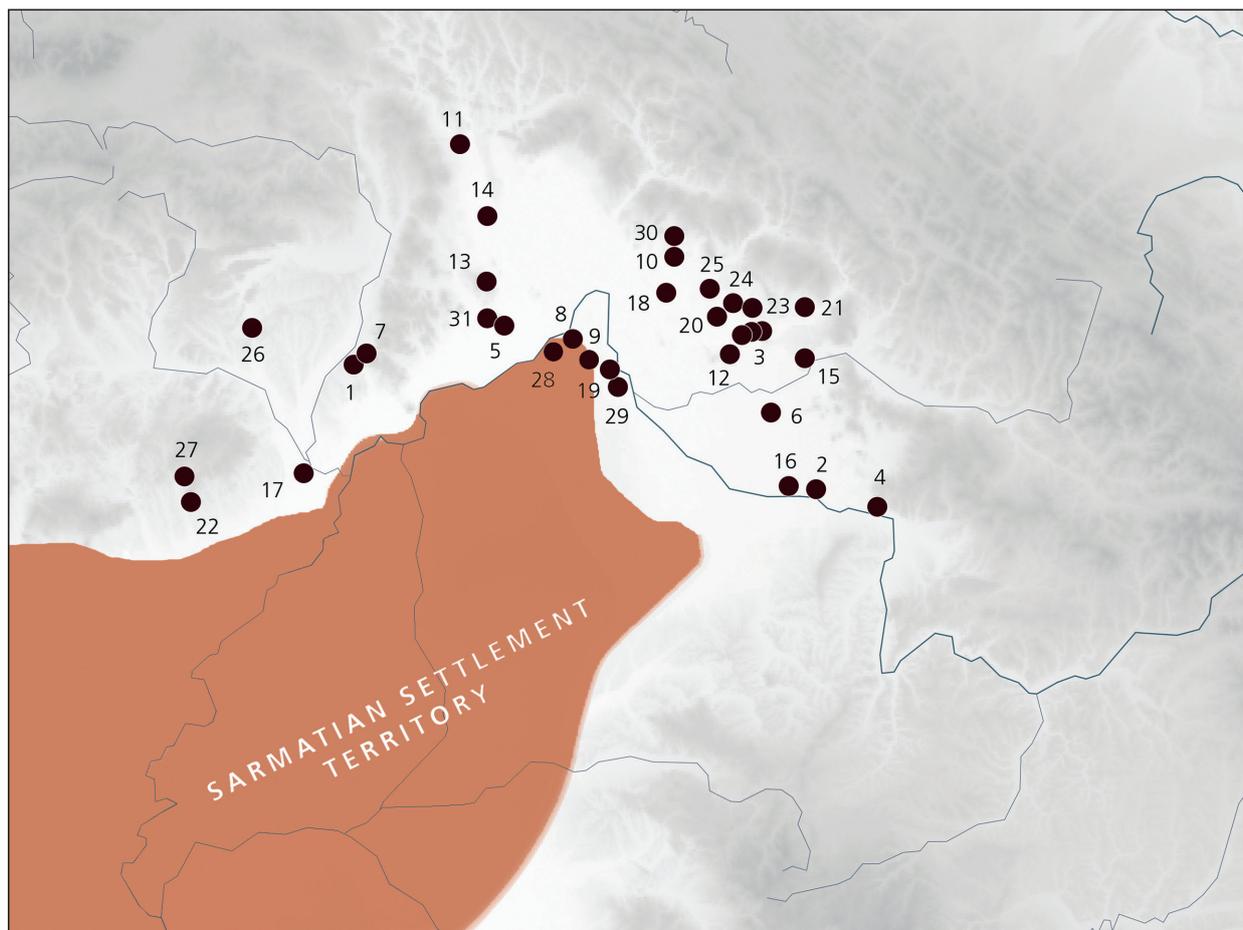
<sup>754</sup> In connection with the gold torc (**fig. 155, 2**) found in the vicinity of Nyíregyháza we have already suggested that this date may be modified in the light of the new finds.

<sup>755</sup> Némethi/Gindele 1997. The Sarmatian buckle from Carei (Párducz 1947, 50 pl. 3, 12) provides a good anchor for the date of their arrival (Vaday/Kulcsár 1984, 240 fig. 4, 7). We

are indebted to Gindele and Némethi of the County Museum of Satu Mare for generously sharing their knowledge of the period's finds with us.

<sup>756</sup> Rusanova 1993, 172 map 30.

<sup>757</sup> We return to the problem at the end of the chapter when discussing the archaeological finds.



**Fig. 203** Distribution of the Przeworsk culture in the Upper Tisza region until the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Orange: Sarmatian settlement territory. – Sites of the Przeworsk culture: **1** Abaújszántó. – **2** Apa. – **3** Ardánháza/Ardanovo. – **4** Béla/Boinești. – **5** Bodrog. – **6** Bratovo. – **7** Gibárt. – **8** Kékcse. – **9** Kisvárd. – **10** Klenovec/Novej Klenovec. – **11** Kvakovce. – **12** Kvasovo. – **13** Lastovce. – **14** Lesné. – **15** Malaja Kopanja. – **16** Mediešu Aurit. – **17** Muhi. – **18** Mukačeve. – **19** Nagyvarsány. – **20** Novoselica. – **21** Osoj. – **22** Sirok. – **23** Smoglovica. – **24** Stanovo. – **25** Svaljava. – **26** Szendrőlád. – **27** Terpes. – **28** Tizsakanyár. – **29** Vásárosnamény. – **30** Verhnja Viznica. – **31** Zemplin. – (After Godłowski 1993, fig. 2; Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1994a, fig. 1; Kobály 1997-1998, fig. 1). – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

ishing sense of security among the province's population<sup>758</sup>. The Sarmatians in Banat, along the Maros, in Moesia Superior and along the *limes* of Pannonia Inferior were pacified by the combined operations of the Moesian and Pannonian armies in 159-160. Although the heavy fighting was followed by a period of peace, this respite was short-lived. Various population groups, »other tribes, who had been driven on by the more distant barbarians [Goths] and had retreated before them« towards the Empire, »were ready to attack Italy if not peaceably received«<sup>759</sup>. Obviously, the great number of peoples threatening the Danubian provinces could hardly have all been admitted into the Empire. Following a Marcomannic (and perhaps Quadian and lazygian) incursion in 162<sup>760</sup>, hostilities broke out in earnest in the late 160s. In 166 a host of barbarian peoples unknown to the Romans, such as the Langobards and the Obii, over-ran Pannonia Superior. Dacia

<sup>758</sup> Noll 1954, 52-56 map. – Barkóczi 1957, 506-507. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 37. It has been suggested that the Abony hoard was also concealed at this time (Barkóczi 1957, 506-507).

<sup>759</sup> SHA Marc. Ant. XIV.

<sup>760</sup> SHA Marc. Ant. XII: »While the Parthian war was still in progress, the Marcomannic war broke out«. For a discussion of this passage, see Alföldi 1942a, 191.

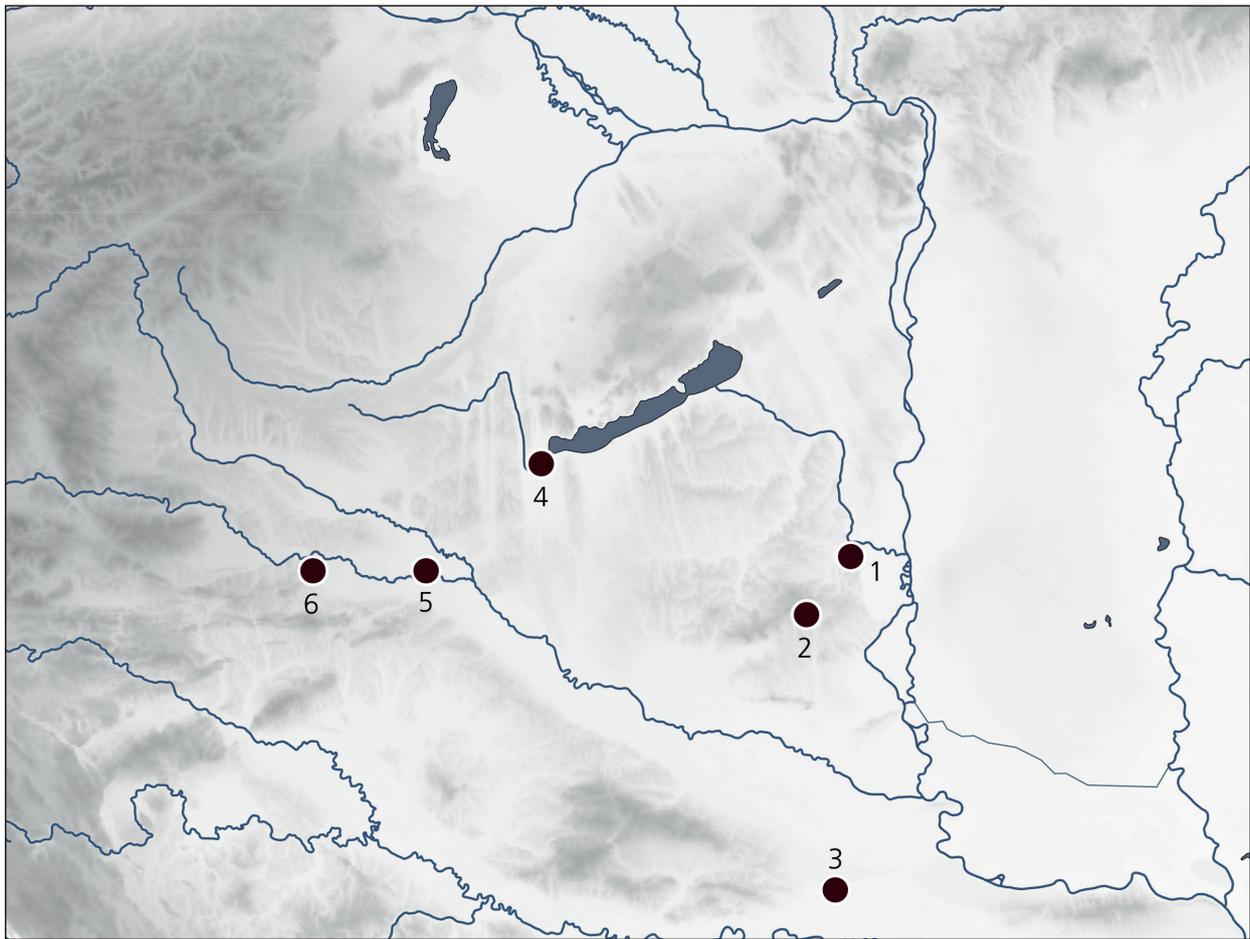


**Fig. 204** The westernmost site of the Carpathian Barrows culture lies at Csengersima, where typical Germanic vessels accompanied a scattered cremation burial under a kurgan investigated in 2009. – (JAM, A. Jakab's excavation, unpublished; photos G. Boros; drawings G. Beleznai).

enjoyed a few months' long, illusory peace, to be attacked simultaneously from the north and west in late May-June 167.

### The Great Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars

One of the fiercest wars in the history of the Roman Empire took place during Marcus Aurelius' reign and had a long-term bearing on the *imperium's* subsequent fate (figs 206-208). The Roman losses are best il-



**Fig. 205** Pannonian coin hoards concealed in the 150s: **1** Bonyhád. – **2** Szemely. – **3** Bara Osatina. – **4** Zalahosszúfalu. – **5** Ptuj (Poetovio). – **6** Trögern. – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

illustrated by the fact that the Quadi and Iazyges alone returned over 150,000 prisoners after the conclusion of the peace treaty ending the war<sup>761</sup>.

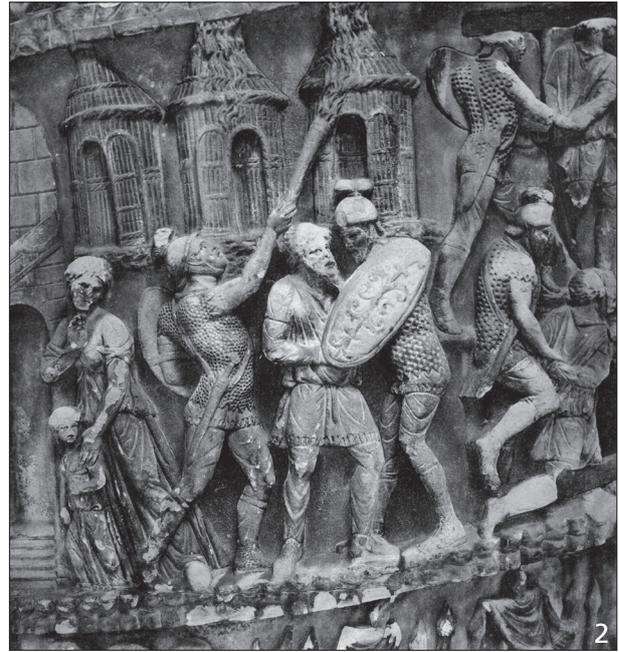
From the borders of Illyricum even into Gaul, all the nations banded together against us – the Marcomanni, Varistae, Hermunduri and Quadi, the Suebians, Sarmatians, Lacinges and Buri, these and certain others together with the Victuali, namely, Osi, Bessi, Cobotes, Roxolani, Bastarnae, Alani, Peucini, and finally, the Costoboci. Furthermore, war threatened in Parthia and Britain. Thereupon, by immense labour on his own part, while his soldiers reflected his energy, and both legates and prefects of the guard led the host, he conquered these exceedingly fierce peoples [...] <sup>762</sup>.

While there is a voluminous literature on the causes, course and consequences of the war, far less is known about this period than one would expect in view of its importance. Several, often contradictory hypotheses

<sup>761</sup> Alföldi 1936, 161.

<sup>762</sup> SHA Marc.Ant. XII. The Victovali and the Lacingi first appear in the sources at this time. See Alföldi 1942a, n. 216, for a

discussion of this passage and its problem, together with the earlier literature.



**Fig. 206** Scenes from the Marcus Column: **1** Roman army crosses over the Danube on a bridge of boats. – **2** Romans defeated barbarians in a cruel struggle. – (After Petersen/Domaszewski/Calderini 1896, pls X, a; CX, b).



**Fig. 207** Scene of battle with Sarmatians. – (After Petersen/Domaszewski/Calderini 1896, pl. Cla).



**Fig. 208** Detail of Marcus Aurelius' equestrian statue in Capitoline Hill, Rome. – (Photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

have been proposed for the chronology and even the sequence of events, and the emperor's plans. It is not our intention to review or even summarise the extensive literature on this subject; instead, we shall concentrate on the impact of the war on the Sarmatians, a people at least as affected as the Romans, seeing that they were extremely active participants, especially in the last phase of the war. (fig. 209)

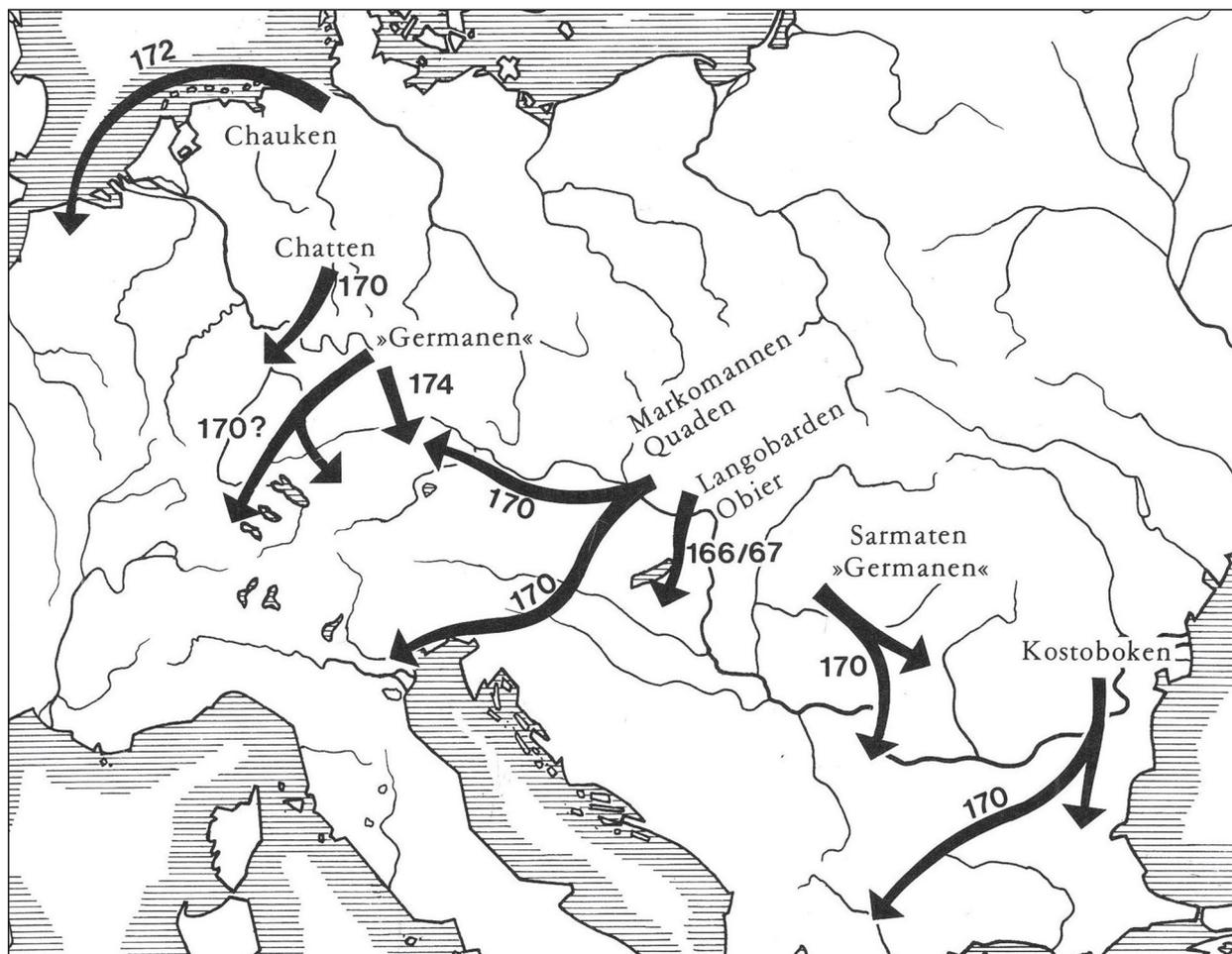


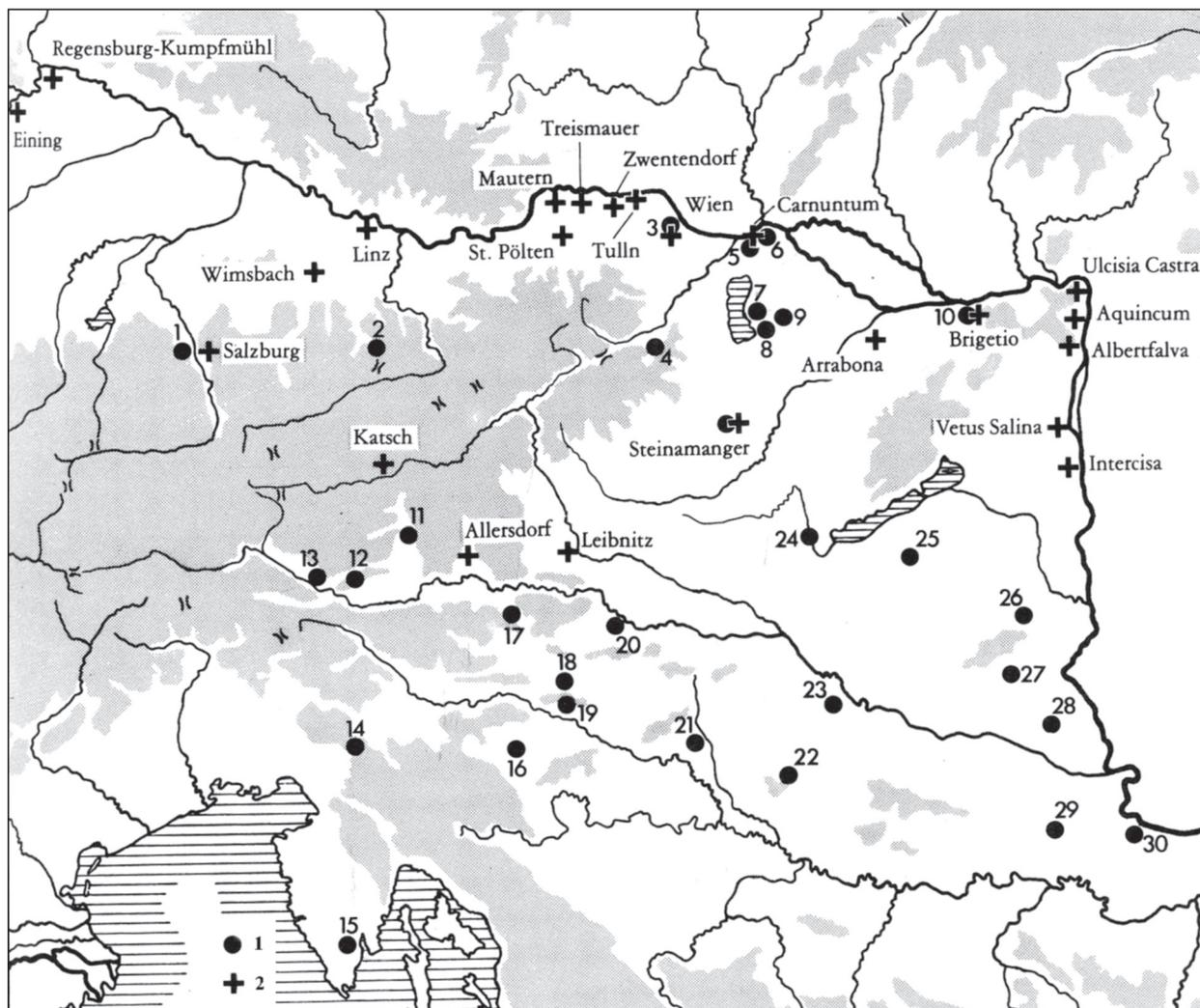
Fig. 209 Map of the campaigns of the Marcomannic Wars. – (After Böhme 1975, fig. 3).

The onslaught against the province was begun by the Germanic peoples. Most scholars traditionally date the raid of 6,000 Langobards and Obii against Pannonia Superior to 166 AD, the beginning of the war, and link this event to a peace delegation of eleven peoples who had negotiated with Iulius Bassus, the province's governor:

Six thousand Langobardi and Obii crossed the Ister, but the cavalry under Vindex issued forth and the infantry commanded by Candidus arrived, so that the barbarians were completely routed. Then, thrown into consternation by such an outcome to their very first undertaking, the barbarians sent envoys to Iulius Bassus, the governor of Pannonia, choosing for the purpose Ballomarius, king of the Marcomanni, and ten others, one for each nation. These envoys made peace, which they ratified with oaths, and then returned home<sup>763</sup>.

It is uncertain whether the Sarmatian envoy had been present at the negotiations. It seems likely that they had been absent. The reason for this is that the Pannonian archaeological evidence offers a good idea of

<sup>763</sup> Dio LXXI.3.1. For a critical assessment, see Alföldi 1942a, 192 n. 223.



**Fig. 210** Coin hoards and destruction levels dated to the period of Marcomannic Wars in Pannonia, Noricum and Raetia: **1** coin hoards. – **2** destruction levels. – (After Böhme 1975, fig. 7).

the devastation wrought by the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars. Firstly, the destruction levels dated by coins and burnt *terra sigillata* wares<sup>764</sup>, and, secondly, the coin hoards (fig. 210) provide ample evidence that the first major barbarian invasions – the offensives led by the Langobards and the Obii in 166-167 and the *expeditio Germanica* of around 170-171 after a relative respite – affected Pannonia from the north. In the course of the latter, the barbarians penetrated the province along the Amber Road and ravaged the province's western regions, advancing as far as Aquileia and Opitergium (Oderzo). A lack of *terra sigillata* wares in the eastern half of Transdanubia, i. e. in Pannonia Inferior, can only be noted from 178-179, reflecting a (temporary) decline in trade with the western provinces<sup>765</sup>. Future research will no doubt shed light on the role of the Sarmatians along the Pannonian front during the first phase of the war.

<sup>764</sup> For the destruction layers dated by *sigillata* wares, see Gabler 2006, 126-128.

<sup>765</sup> For an excellent overview, see Gabler 2006, esp. 126-131. In addition to the archaeological evidence, we must also bear in mind that only the governor of Pannonia Superior took any measures, again confirming the assumption that the first

major strike was against the westerly areas of Transdanubia (Alföldi 1942a, 222 n. 225). For the events and the battle fronts, see also Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 37-38. Another piece of indirect evidence is that the amount of amber declined perceptibly after the war (Prohászka 2005/2006, 88, with the relevant literature).

Although the barbarians in the Danube region could be kept at bay through negotiations until the end of the Parthian War, the war continued on two fronts in the Carpathian Basin after the conclusion of the eastern war. Dacia found itself in an extremely threatened position. There was a major barbarian incursion around 167, reflected by an assemblage of wax tablets found at Roşia Montană (Alburnus Maior), one of which records that only 17 of the 54 members of a burial society could attend a meeting held in 167. It would appear that the tablets had been buried owing to an attack launched in 167 and that this attack was soon followed by another one because none of the society's members had returned for the tablets (fig. 211)<sup>766</sup>.

The Empire had to deal with a sweeping, concerted attack of the barbarians of the Danube region. The situation was further aggravated by the plague that broke out in 168 or 169 and decimated the population; as a consequence »the dead were removed in carts and waggons«<sup>767</sup>. Faced with a truly catastrophic situation, the Romans drew up an aligned defence strategy in which Dacia was to play a key role as one of the springboards of the planned counter-attacks<sup>768</sup>. The Dacian army was commanded by M. Claudius Fronto, one of the period's most brilliant military leaders. In 169/170, full-scale hostilities erupted along the border of Dacia and Moesia Inferior. Fronto, commander of the two provinces' united army, fell in battle<sup>769</sup>. The barbarians invaded Dacia in 170, advancing as far as Sarmizegetusa, the province's capital. Marcus Aurelius personally led an expedition to Dacia and it seems likely that Sextus Cornelius Clemens, *consularis et dux trium Daciarum* (the joint commander of the three Dacias), entered office at this time. In 171 or 172, the governor of Tres Daciae concluded an alliance with the Hasding Vandals:

The Astingi, led by their chieftains Raüs and Raptus, came into Dacia with their entire households, hoping to secure both money and land in return for their alliance. But failing of their purpose, they left their wives and children under the protection of Clemens, until they should acquire the land of the Costoboci by their arms [...] <sup>770</sup>.

In exchange for receiving land, the eastern Germanic Hasdingi defeated the Costoboci of the free Dacians – probably somewhere along the Lower Danube – who swept into Greece through Dobrudja from their territories in the north-eastern foreland of the Carpathians<sup>771</sup>. Something happened upon their return because the Vandals attacked the province again. This time, the Romans sought out the Lacringi, a people related to the Vandals, as their allies:

[...] upon conquering that people, they proceeded to injure Dacia no less than before. The Lacringi, fearing that Clemens in his dread of them might lead these newcomers into the land which they themselves were inhabiting, attacked them while off their guard and won a decisive victory. As a result, the Astingi committed no further acts of hostility against the Romans,

<sup>766</sup> Alföldi 1936, 162; 1942a, 192. In his discussion of the finds from Alburnus Maior, Visy 2005, pointed out that an economic crisis had broken out in the wake of the war. This is reflected by, amongst other things, the fact that in 169, Marcus Aurelius auctioned his private property to fund his military expenses. The austerity measures, such as the production of military diplomas from wood instead of the usual bronze for eleven years, are another indication of the economic crisis.

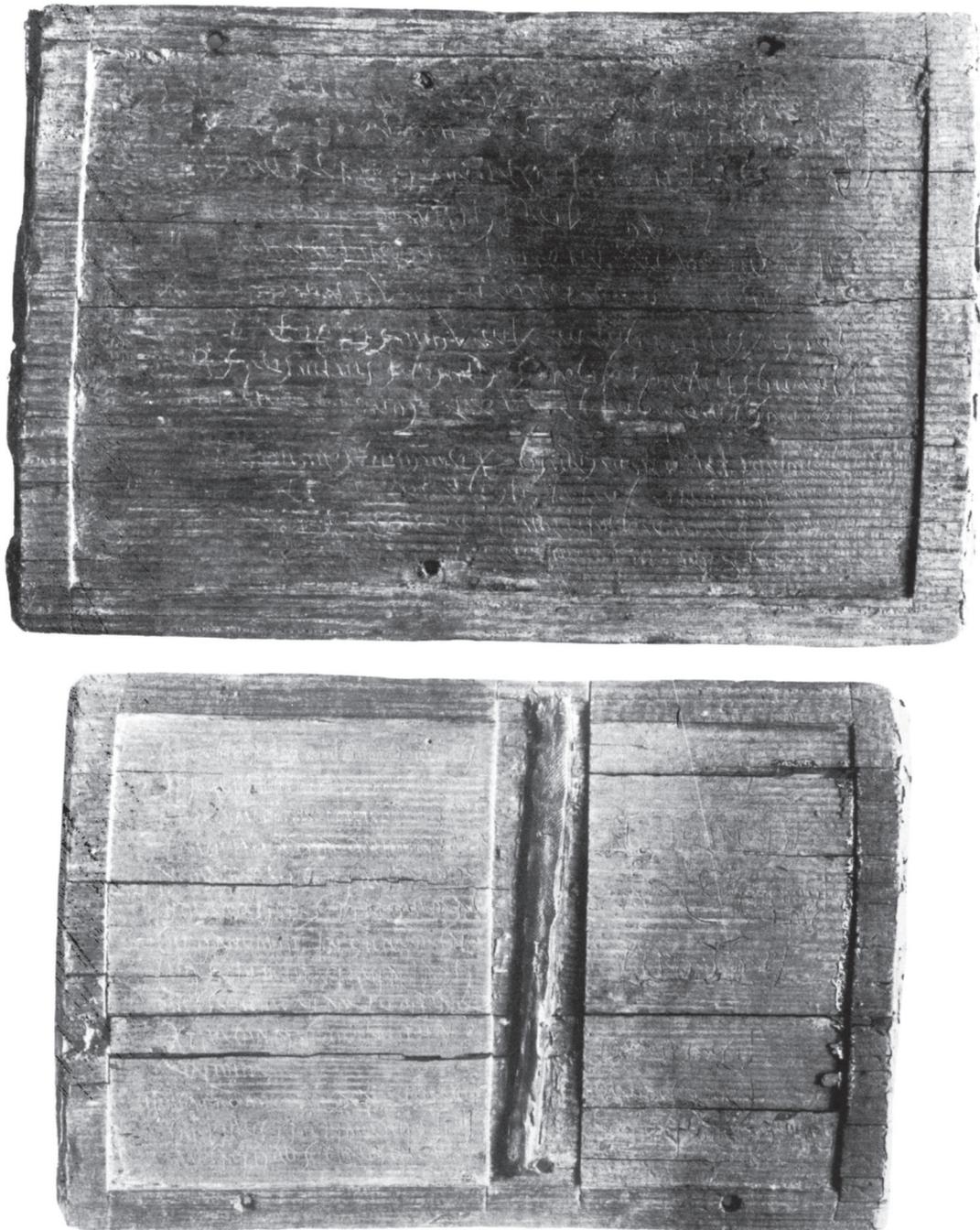
<sup>767</sup> SHA Marc.Ant. XIII.

<sup>768</sup> For the role of Dacia, see Angyal/Balla 1972, 154-155.

<sup>769</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 194, with the relevant epigraphic material and earlier literature.

<sup>770</sup> Dio LXXI.12.1. This event can perhaps be traced in the archaeological material of the early Roman Age from the Szatmár-Bereg Plain brought to light as part of intensive research during recent years. The assemblages uncovered during the excavations at Csengersima (Gindele/Istvánovits 2009), Beregsurány (Istvánovits 2004) and recently on settlements in County Satu Mare in Romania (Németi/Gindele 1997) reflect a strong mix of Dacian and Germanic artefact types.

<sup>771</sup> For the incursion, see Alföldi 1942a, 194. The archaeological heritage of the Costoboci is usually identified with the Lipica Culture distributed in the Upper Dniester region (Bidzilja/Rusanova 1993, 103, with further literature).



**Fig. 211** Wax tablet from Roșia Montană (Alburnus Maior). – (After Tóth 2001, fig. 18).

but in response to urgent supplications addressed to Marcus they received from him both money and the privilege of asking for land in case they should inflict some injury upon those who were then fighting against him<sup>772</sup>.

The Romans thus succeeded in pacifying the two Vandal tribes in the foreland of Dacia. It is therefore hardly surprising that finds, such as the typical male burials containing weapons of the Przeworsk culture (fig. 202)

<sup>772</sup> Dio LXXI.12.1.

and culturally attributed to the Vandals, especially the Victovali, appeared in the region in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century (stage B2/C1)<sup>773</sup>.

Returning to the events in Dacia, it is inconceivable that an attack against the province could have been launched without the active participation of the Sarmatians. It is most unlikely that the Costoboci could have approached the Lower Danube region without the Roxolani learning about their movements (and probably consenting to it). At the same time, the period's Sarmatian assemblages indicate that the Sarmatian population of the Carpathian Basin did not decline, as might be expected in the wake of the war and the epidemic, but had actually grown dynamically. This is best reflected by the high number of newly-opened cemeteries from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century<sup>774</sup>. The most likely date for any mass immigration from areas beyond the Carpathians would be the early 170s when the defences of Dacia (and, probably, of Moesia Inferior) were shattered. This date is also confirmed by the fact that Marcus Aurelius spent the better part of the early 170s conducting systematic campaigns against various Germanic tribes. The lazyges remained beyond his field of vision until the winter of 173-174 when they crossed the frozen Danube and devastated Pannonia<sup>775</sup>. The Romans scored a decisive victory in 175, when Marcus Aurelius took the title »*Sarmaticus*«<sup>776</sup>. Cassius Dio described the peace negotiations:

The lazyges were defeated and came to terms, Zanticus himself appearing as a suppliant before Antoninus. Previously they [the lazyges] had imprisoned Banadaspus, their second king, for making overtures to him; but now all the chief men came with Zanticus and made the same compact as that to which the Quadi and the Marcomani had agreed, except that they were required to dwell twice as far away from the Ister as those tribes<sup>777</sup>. Indeed, the emperor had wished to exterminate them utterly. For that they were still strong at this time and had done the Romans great harm was evident from the fact that they returned a hundred thousand captives that were still in their hands even after the many who had been sold, had died, or had escaped, and that they promptly furnished as their contribution to the alliance eight thousand cavalry, fifty-five hundred of whom he sent to Britain<sup>778</sup>.

Dio recorded two negotiations: very little is known about the first agreement, concluded with the envoys led by Banadaspus; the second one, whose conditions are described in detail, was reached with Zanticus and the Sarmatian leaders. These events can be dated to 175<sup>779</sup>.

<sup>773</sup> In Hungary, the finds from the Upper Tisza region were first reviewed by Bóna, who identified these Germanic assemblages as the heritage of the Victovali (Bóna 1986, 61-65). The chronology and typology of the type finds (shields, spurs, swords, etc.) brought to light from the cremation burials of the Przeworsk culture have been reliably established by Polish research. Godłowski's excellent overview of the archaeological evidence and the literary sources, also affecting the finds from Hungary is especially important for us (Godłowski 1993, 69-78).

<sup>774</sup> Due to the lack of site gazetteers and a precise chronology, the growth in the number of cemeteries is difficult to prove. Despite the paucity of data, an increase in burial sites from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD can be seen in the catalogue of Kulcsár 1998a. This increase in the number of burial sites cannot be explained by natural population growth alone. Despite the uncertainties in chronology, the main tendency is amply illustrated by the fact that the number of cemeteries dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, most of which were opened after the Marcomannic Wars, doubled compared to the preceding period. This is obvious even without going into

the details of how many burials a particular cemetery contained; we counted only the sites. The cemeteries excavated after the publication of Kulcsár's study conform with this tendency.

<sup>775</sup> Mócsy 1974, 190.

<sup>776</sup> Sulimirski 1970, 175 pl. 45. Coins inscribed with the legend DE SARMATIIS were issued at this time (fig. 212) (López Sánchez 2007, 90).

<sup>777</sup> In the case of the Sarmatians, this meant a 15 km wide zone, see Graf 1936, 130.

<sup>778</sup> Dio LXXI.16. It is unclear who exactly captured Banadaspus and little is known about the relation between Banadaspus and Zanticus. We are indebted to Everett Wheeler for his generous help in interpreting the text. Zanticus' name means »son of the tribe«, while Banadaspus' name translates as »leader of the horses« (Abaev 1979, 307. 310). The mention of the two kings sheds light on the Sarmatians' social organisation and suggests the possible institution of a dual kingship.

<sup>779</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 198. – Mócsy 1974, 190. – Vaday 2001, 177. 179.

Few studies mention that this peace treaty was dictated by necessity:

The revolt of Cassius and Syria forced Marcus Antoninus to make terms with the lazyges very much against his will; indeed, he was so alarmed by the news that he did not even communicate to the senate the conditions of the peace made with them, as he was wont to do in other cases<sup>780</sup>.

This passage would imply that the emperor hardly considered the war to be over. Knowing that the Sarmatians occupied a key position between the two military fronts, it is hardly surprising that they became one of the most important actors in the war.

One might rightly assume that the conditions of the peace treaty, especially the clause prohibiting settlement in a zone directly along the Danube, would be reflected in the archaeological finds. That this is not so is quite understandable. Subsequent events leave no doubt that the Romans failed to resolve the situation to their liking. The remains of a burnt house at Gorsium dated to 178 by *sigillata* wares and the destruction of Pacatus' pottery workshop at the Budapest-Gázgyár (Gasworks) site at about the same time suggest a new Sarmatian incursion<sup>781</sup>. In 179, as Dio reported:

The lazyges sent an embassy and asked to be released from certain of the agreements they had made; and some concessions were granted them, to prevent their becoming entirely alienated. Yet neither they nor the Buri were willing to join the Romans as allies until they had received pledges from Marcus that he would without fail prosecute the war to the uttermost; for they were afraid he might make a treaty with the Quadi, as before, and leave enemies dwelling at their doors<sup>782</sup>.

A new agreement was reached at the lazyges' request:

And when the lazyges proved most useful to them, he released them from many of the restrictions that had been imposed upon them, – in fact, from all save those affecting their assembling and trading together and the requirements that they should not use boats of their own and should keep away from the islands in the Ister. And he permitted them to pass through Dacia in order to have dealings with the Roxolani, as often as the governor of Dacia should give them permission<sup>783</sup>.

It is unclear what the passage between the Roxolani and the lazyges meant. The passage is traditionally considered to have passed through the valley of the Lower Danube in Wallachia, and it is assumed that this route had been used well before the outbreak of the hostilities, otherwise it would hardly have occurred to anyone to pacify the restless barbarians in this manner. The fact that the demand for the passage was raised would suggest that the route had either existed continuously or that its memory was still very much alive among the Sarmatians, to whom it was important for political and economic reasons<sup>783a</sup>. The information contained in Dio's report is inconclusive and raises several questions. Why did the emperor agree to this

<sup>780</sup> Dio LXXI.17.

<sup>781</sup> Bónis/Gabler 1990, 181. – Gabler 2006, 64. 101. Kuzsinszky 1932, 14, who had initially published the Roman industrial centre at the Óbuda-Gázgyár site, believed that the pottery workshop had remained active after 178.

<sup>782</sup> Dio LXXI.18.

<sup>783</sup> Dio LXXI.19.1-2.

<sup>783a</sup> Alföldi 1942, 200. Later research accepted this argument.

unusual and – in view of the above hypothesis – rather dangerous condition? Had the Sarmatians grown so strong? Or, conversely, had they become so weak? When and how did this route evolve? Can this clause of the peace treaty be linked to the immigration of new Sarmatian groups, amongst them the Roxolani? Was this the route used by the new Sarmatian immigrants entering the Carpathian Basin at the time of the Marcomannic Wars? These questions still need to be addressed by Sarmatian research.

It seems quite unlikely for us that the passage of various population groups through the Empire would have been permitted. Even though there is nothing to confirm this in the archaeological record, the interpretation of the passage as a form of controlled trade between different tribes seems more plausible. We may also assume that trade in this form had existed since the creation of the province of Dacia and perhaps ever since the lazyges' migration through Dacian territory<sup>784</sup>.

The peace did not last long after Marcus Aurelius' death. Commodus led a campaign against the peoples living in the Dacian borderland, principally the Buri. The conclusion of this campaign was a peace settlement according to which no-one was permitted to dwell within a forty-stades-wide zone along the Dacian border<sup>785</sup>. Unlike the course followed by Marcus Aurelius, Commodus also resorted to the traditional methods used by Rome, such as subsidies and re-settlements, etc., in addition to the agreement.

The smaller lazygian incursions in 185 and 188 can be regarded as minor quakes in the aftermath of the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars that shook the Empire<sup>786</sup>. Commodus eventually discarded Marcus Aurelius' plans for creating new provinces and decided instead to reinforce the *limes*. In Alföldi's view, this was a grave mistake despite the fact that the losses of the Marcomanni, the Quadi and the lazyges were so great that they »no longer threatened the very existence of the Empire« and their incursions remained no more than local skirmishes<sup>787</sup>. The later raids were at least as devastating, but they no longer threatened the Empire as a whole.

In order to fully understand the Sarmatians' role in the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars, we must address an issue that has been long since researched in Sarmatian studies and which can probably be resolved through the minute analysis of the archaeological finds. Two passages seem to suggest that Marcus Aurelius intended to create two new provinces:

He wished to make a province of Marcomannia and likewise of Sarmatia, and he would have done so had not Avidius Cassius just then raised a rebellion in the East. For three years thereafter he waged war with the Marcomanni, the Hermunduri, the Sarmatians, and the Quadi, and had he lived a year longer he would have made these regions provinces<sup>788</sup>.

To what extent can the emperor's intention recorded here be verified, what was the rationale behind his plan and – assuming that the philosopher-emperor had indeed decided to create the new provinces – how much progress had been made in the organisation of the planned provinces (**fig. 213**)?

The fact itself can hardly be doubted because Cassius Dio even revealed that:

[...] with regard to the Quadi and the Marcomani, who sent envoys [to Marcus Aurelius], the twenty thousand soldiers that were stationed in forts among each of these tribes would not allow them to pasture their flocks or till the soil or do anything else in security, but kept receiving many deserters from the enemy's ranks and captives of their own; yet the soldiers themselves

<sup>784</sup> It is uncertain what the traded commodities were and we can only speculate as to what they may have been.

<sup>785</sup> Dio LXXII.3.

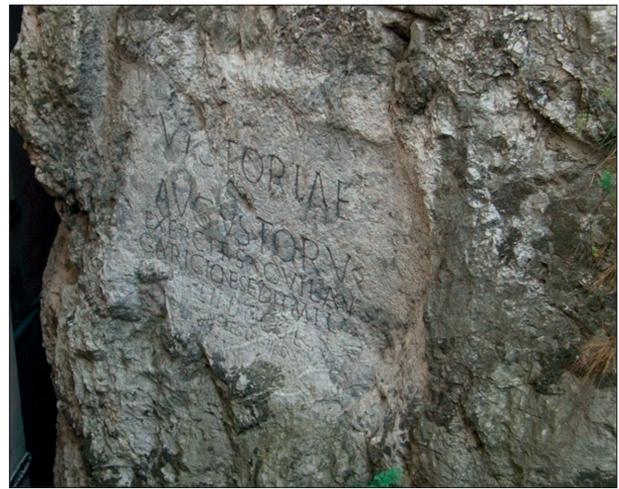
<sup>786</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 203. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 41.

<sup>787</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 202-203.

<sup>788</sup> SHA Marc. Ant. XXIV.5, XXVII.9.



**Fig. 212** Marcus Aurelius' coin with the legend DE SARMATIIS. This is the first unquestionable mentioning of Sarmatians on a Roman coin, referring also to the concept of provincialisation. – (After López Sánchez 2007, fig. 90, 2).



**Fig. 213** Inscription commemorating the Roman victory over Germans in 178-179 in the Váh Valley refers to the existence of a field camp in Trenčín. – (After [www.travelwriter.at/108/005/trencin-roman-inscription.shtml](http://www.travelwriter.at/108/005/trencin-roman-inscription.shtml) [10.10.2012]).

were enduring no great hardships, inasmuch as they had baths and all the necessities of life in abundance. The Quadi, accordingly, being unwilling to endure the forts built to keep watch over them, attempted to migrate in a body to the land of the Semnonnes<sup>789</sup>.

Research on the planned province of Marcomannia is far ahead of that on Sarmatia. It therefore seems reasonable to take as our starting point what we know about the former. Architectural remains that can be interpreted as temporary forts are known from 21 locations and assumed at another eight in Moravia, Lower Austria and Slovakia (fig. 214). Ranging in size from 1 to 50 hectares, these forts can be dated to the close of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The remains of a systematically built Roman centre are currently being excavated at Mušov (fig. 215). The finds brought to light at the site indicate the presence of the Roman army. The archaeological assemblages reflect major changes in settlement patterns during the stage B2/C1, exactly at the time of the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars. The burials of the elite indicate close contacts with Rome, recalling the system of the client states during the Republican period. The evidence thus strongly points towards the initial steps of the region's provincialisation<sup>790</sup>.

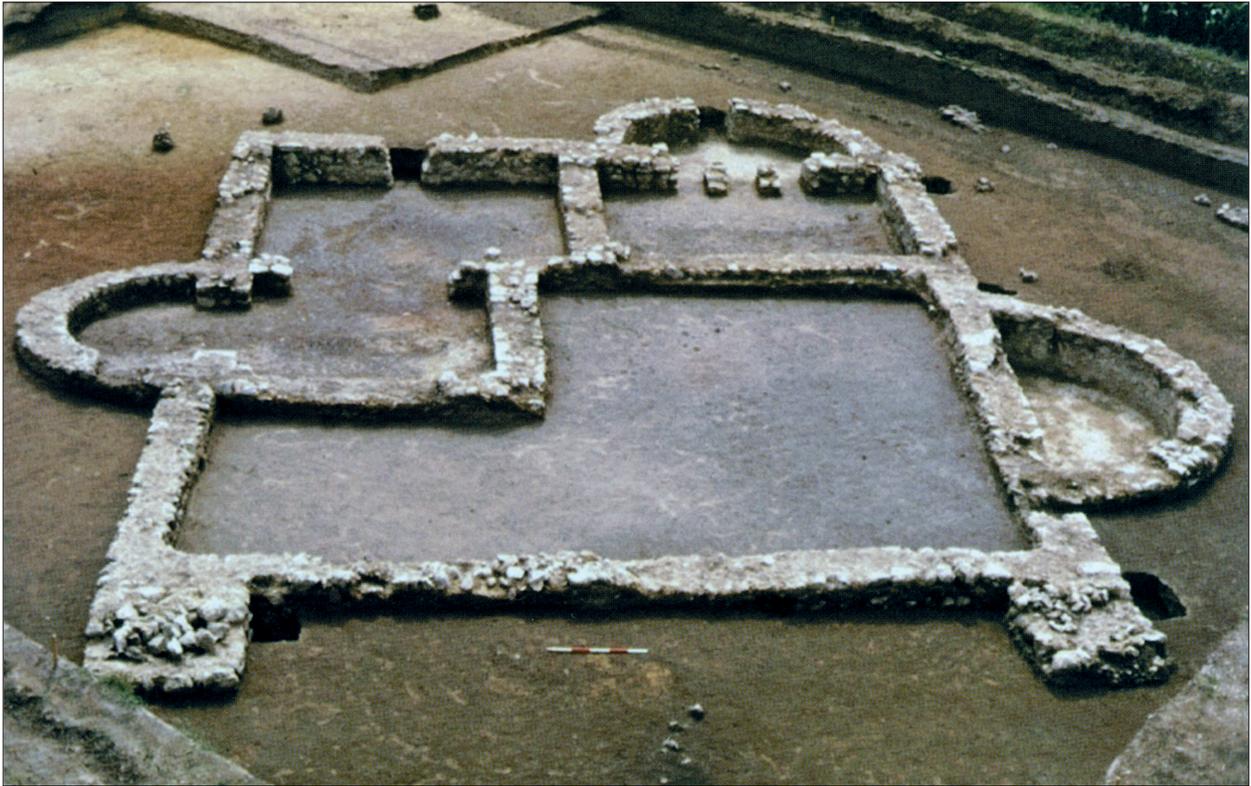
What do we know about Sarmatia? Which territories had been designated for the province? Most scholars assume that the quoted passages refer to the Hungarian Plain, although it has more recently been suggested that the creation of a province in the Wallachian Plain had also been planned<sup>791</sup>. Dio's passage only mentions the Marcomanni and the Quadi, but not Sarmatians regarding the stationing of Roman troops in barbarian lands. It is possible that the emperor's plans for Sarmatia had differed from the very beginning. The presence of 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman buildings on the Hungarian Plain still remains to be confirmed. Due to the absence of systematic research, the nature and exact date of the sites that might be considered is

<sup>789</sup> Dio LXXI.20.1-2. – Alföldi 1942a, 200.

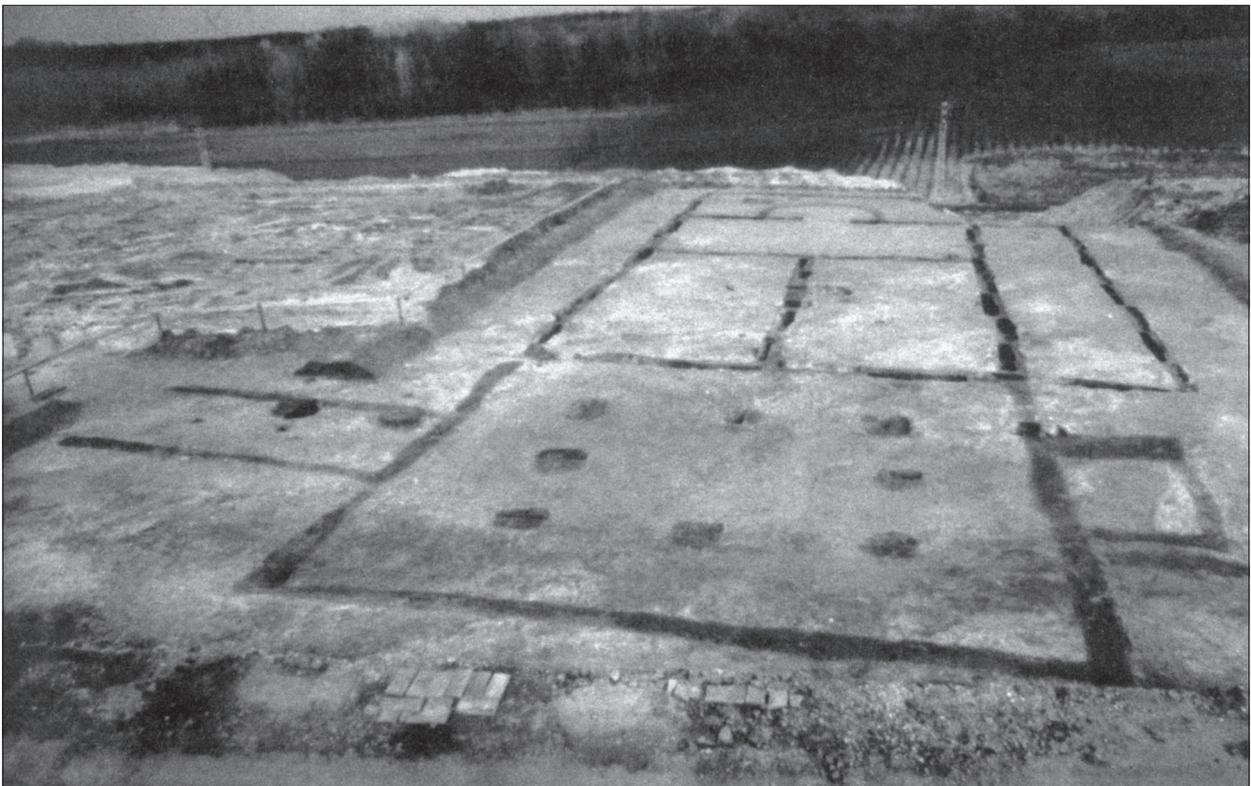
<sup>790</sup> Coins inscribed with the legend SARMATIA DEVICTA (fig. 212) issued by Marcus Aurelius are another proof that the emperor intended to create a new province (López Sánchez 2007, 90-92). For the data on the planned province of Marcomannia, see Komoróczy 2003, for a comprehensive overview of the

literature on this issue and a review of earlier hypotheses. He argued that the evidence definitely supports the intended provincialisation. See also Komoróczy 2009, for an examination of the military installations.

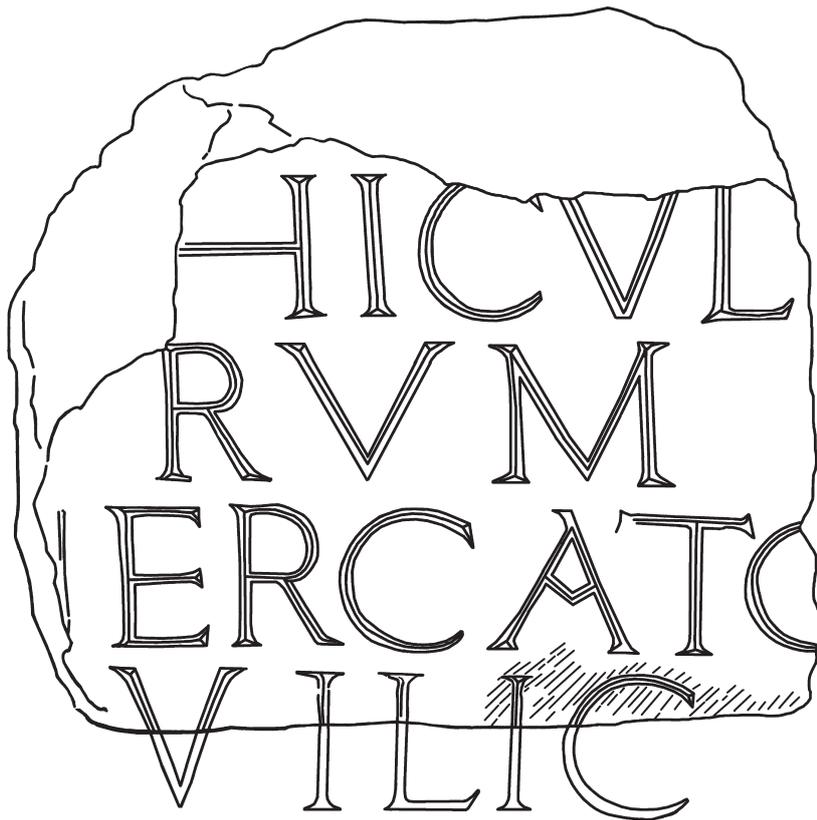
<sup>791</sup> Alföldi 1940a, 47.



**Fig. 214** Building in the Roman style in the Barbaricum: remains of the stone building at Bratislava-Dúbravka in Slovakia, beyond the Roman territory. – (After Breeze/Jilek/Thiel 2005, fig. 17).



**Fig. 215** *Mansio* of a high-ranking person: an apsidal building in Mušov-Neurissen, South Moravia. – (After Komoróczy 2006, fig. 9).



**Fig. 216** Inscription from the Roman post station in Parthiscum (Szeged). – (After Mócsy 1974, 101 fig. 17).

unclear. Several smaller way stations controlled the road section between Pannonia and Dacia in the Maros Valley<sup>792</sup>, the most important among them lying in Szeged, where a post station had been constructed under Antoninus Pius or earlier (**fig. 216**). The Roman military remains uncovered at Mezőzombor have been dated to the period of the Marcomannic Wars, but little else is known about them<sup>793</sup>. The other architectural remains from the Hungarian Plain are either later or their date is uncertain<sup>794</sup>.

The construction of forts on the left bank of the Danube also began at this time. The best known among them is the fort at Iža-Leányvár (Castella Celamantia) opposite the legionary fort of Brigetio. Similar forts are known from areas other than the Quadic border, one being Transaquincum (Budapest-Rákos Stream mouth), more or less contemporary with Iža, opposite the legionary fort of Aquincum, probably built under Commodus' reign; and the fort of Contra Aquincum (Budapest Eskü/Március 15 Square) (**fig. 217**), constructed sometime later<sup>795</sup>.

An interesting hypothesis must certainly be mentioned in connection with the Roman buildings found in barbarian territory. Vaday noted that four branches of the Csörsz Dyke can be identified in some areas of the Hungarian Plain. In her view, the structure of the fourth line differs from the others, suggesting that it may

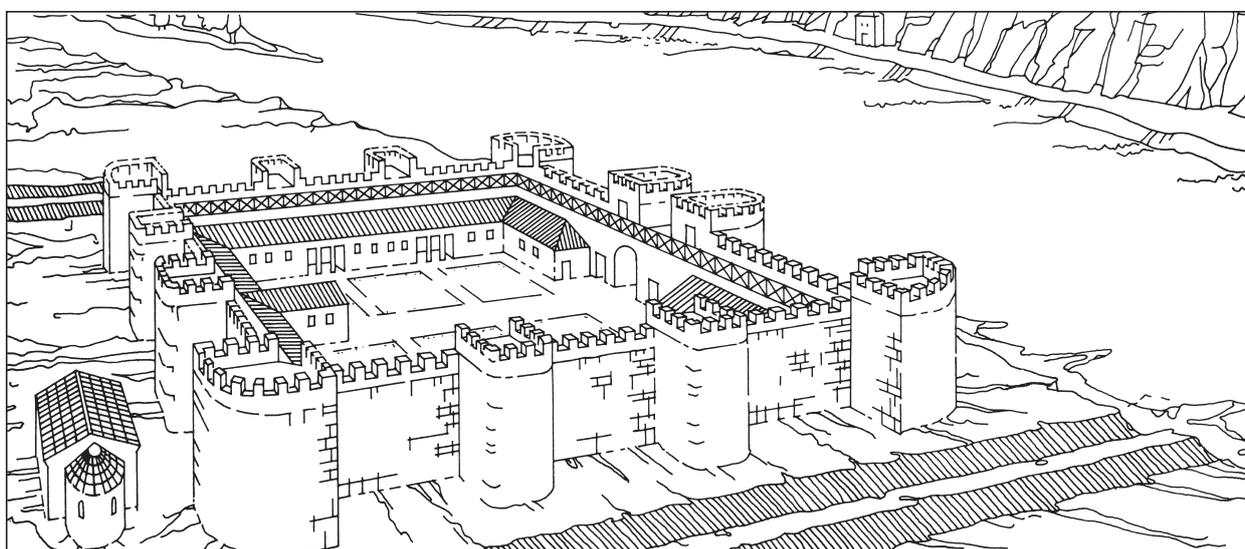
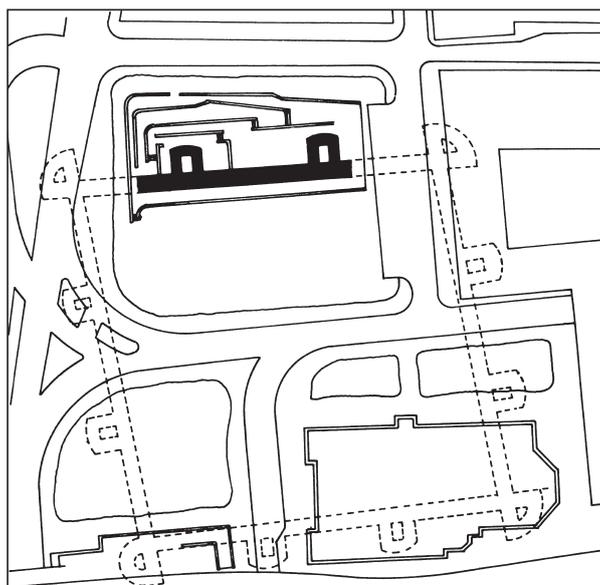
<sup>792</sup> Benea 1986, 457. – Vaday 2003a, 10, enlarged our current knowledge. However, the lack of bibliographic references makes the evaluation of Vaday's data virtually impossible. For the westward continuation of the road in the Maros Valley, see Patay 2005.

<sup>793</sup> Mentioned by Vaday 2001, 179. The original publication merely states that »the function of the three features dating from the Roman Imperial period is not known. Their regular size, as well as their location would support an interpretation as buildings, even though there is nothing to support this.

What is certain is that the three rectangular features were related« (Simán 1982, 103).

<sup>794</sup> Cf. Vaday 2003a, 10-11. She mentions an alleged *burgus* on the left bank of the Zagyva (unfortunately, without any bibliographic references) which she dates to this period and hypothesises a *limes* road in the Zagyva Valley starting from Aquincum through the planned province (Vaday 2003b, 206).

<sup>795</sup> Bertók 1997, 167. – Visy 2003, 61-62, both with further literature.



**Fig. 217** Reconstruction of the Contra Aquincum fort in the Late Roman period (Budapest-Eskü/Március 15 Square). – (After Hajnóczy 1987, figs 181-184).

have marked the border of Marcus Aurelius' planned province. Without further research, this suggestion is no more than speculation<sup>795a</sup>.

Roman finds testify to lively contact between the Quadic and Marcomannic lands and the Empire in the period preceding the Marcomannic Wars. In contrast, trade relations with the Sarmatian lands became more intensive from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century onward (**fig. 218**). In this case, the creation of the planned province was not preceded by merchant activity, one of the usual procedures.

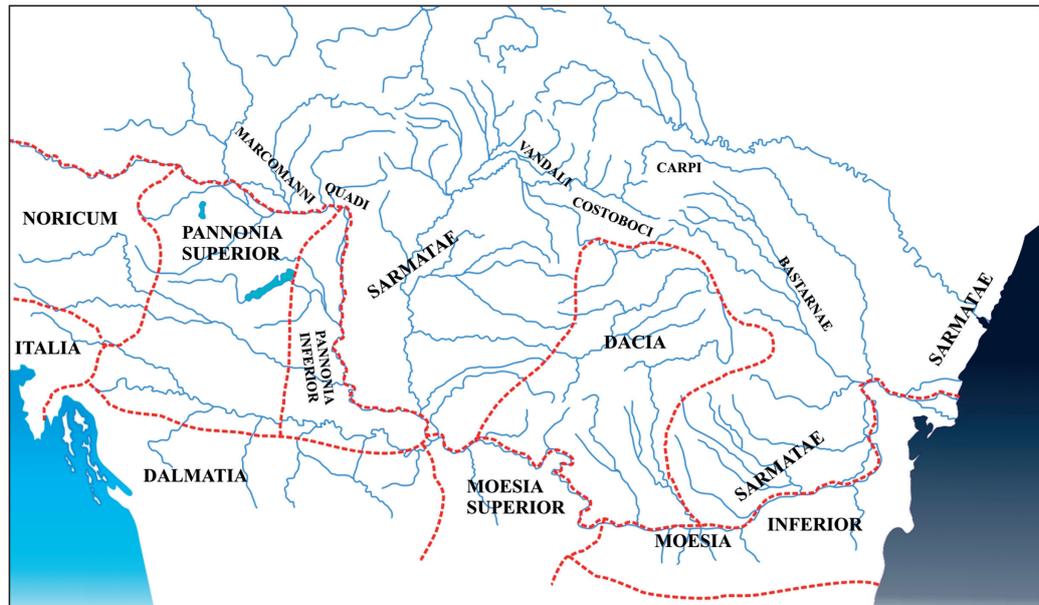
Cassius Dio's obvious differentiation between the Germanic peoples and the Sarmatians, as well as the differences in the archaeological material, suggest that the plans for Sarmatia diverged considerably from those concerning Marcomannia. The reason can probably be sought in the diverse nature of the contacts established with the two barbarian peoples.

<sup>795a</sup> Vaday 2003b, 206. For the Csórsz Dyke, see chapter »The Csórsz or Devil's Dyke«.



**Fig. 218** The Roman finds from Hungarian Plain testify to the increasingly intensive contacts between the Sarmatians and the Romans from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century: **1** Kistelek-Geraföld, Feature 216 (after Balogh et al. 2005, fig. 4, 12). – **2** Nyíregyháza-Felsősim, stray find (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation and photo, unpublished). – **3** Hévízgyörk, Grave 14 (courtesy of the Petőfi Museum, Aszód). – **4** Nagyhalász-Tétke, stray find (JAM, inv. no. 64.1113.1; photo Z. Toldi). – **5** Szada-Mélykerekői-dűlő (courtesy of the HNM; photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár). – **6** Nyíregyháza-Felsősim, Grave 71 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation and photo, unpublished). – **7** Nyíregyháza-Felsősim, Grave 181 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation and photo, unpublished). – **8** Tiszavasvári (JAM, inv. no. 54.8.1).

**Fig. 219** Location of the barbarian peoples of the Carpathian Basin in the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. – (Map E. Istvánovits).



One question that needs to be addressed in the light of the above is whether the barbarians along the Danube came under pressure from their more distant neighbours, leading them to request their annexation to the Empire (as has been generally assumed in the case of the Sarmatians), or, conversely, whether Marcus Aurelius' vision of the new province was modelled on the creation of Dacia, with the intention to totally annihilate the lazyges and settle new colonists on the Hungarian Plain. The latter possibility is given weight by Cassius Dio's remarks<sup>796</sup>.

It would appear that Marcus Aurelius was determined to occupy the entire Carpathian Basin, a strategically sound plan. He apparently devised two different procedures for creating provinces in the Germanic and Sarmatian lands, perhaps in the light of the relations established earlier with the two neighbouring barbarian peoples. In the case of the Germanic peoples, provincialisation of their lands seemed the more sensible option, and in view of the preceding events, the Romans began to carry out their plan at a more dynamic pace (by imposing a military presence). In the case of the Sarmatians, however, they seem to have had more of a brutal revenge in mind. Marcus Aurelius died before he could carry out his plans and his son abandoned the project. The entire territory of the Carpathian Basin never came under Roman rule (fig. 219) which, in our opinion, determined its history to this very day as a region poised on the boundary between east and west<sup>797</sup>.

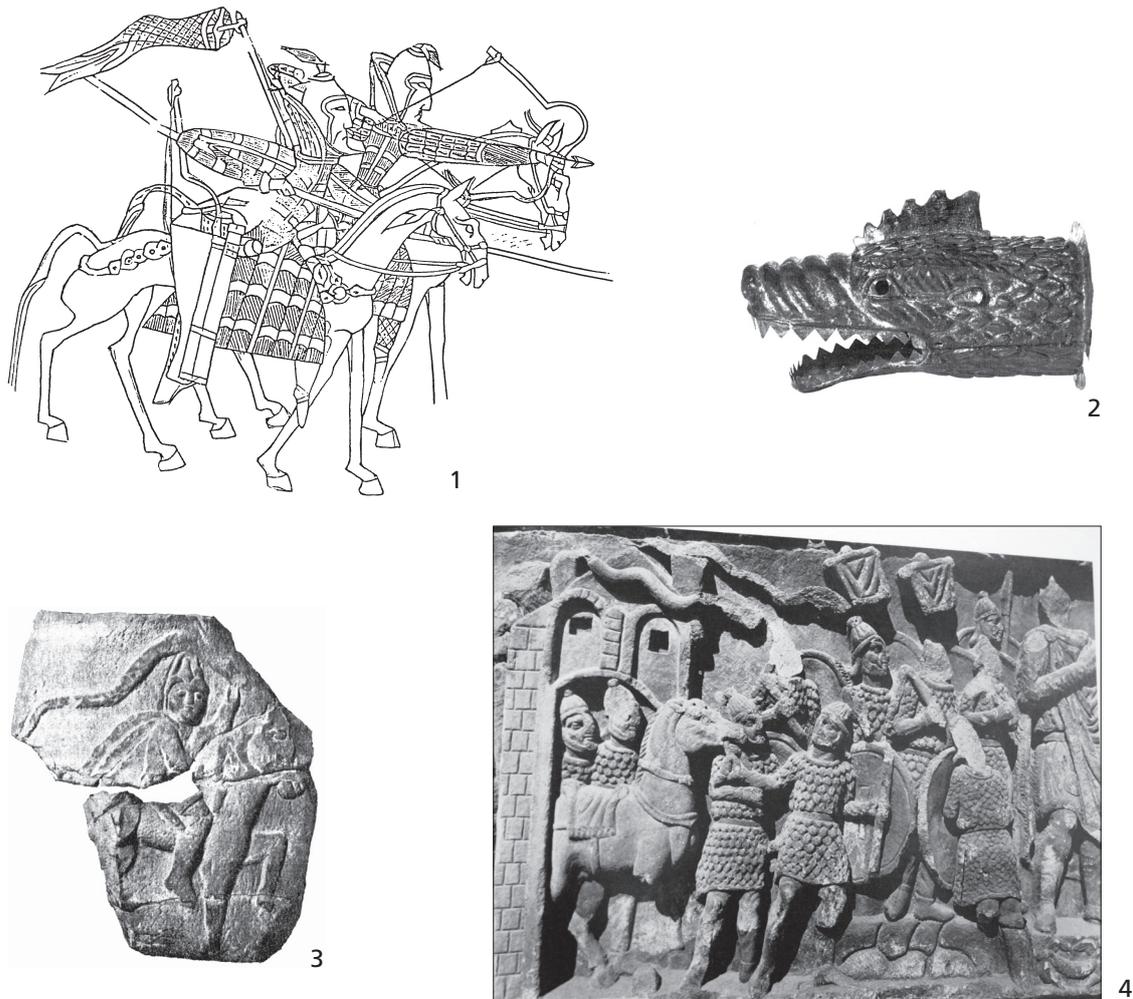
### The Archaeological Finds

From the mid and late 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, a major change in the Sarmatian material can be noted in comparison to the situation after the Dacian Wars. The appearance of new artefact types can be associated with the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars and the arrival of new Sarmatian groups, conventionally labelled the Szentes-

<sup>796</sup> Dio LXXI.13.1, LXXI.16.2. – Alföldi 1940a, 47.

<sup>797</sup> It has also been suggested that the creation of the new provinces was discontinued not because of Marcus Aurelius' death, but for economic reasons: a protectorate, into which the two

barbarian territories would be incorporated, would have been far more advantageous (López Sánchez 2007, 91-92, with further literature).



**Fig. 220** 1 dragon standard on a bone plaque with carved scenes from Orlat near Samarkand (detail; courtesy of A. S. Semënov / A. M. Savin; drawing A. M. Savin). – 2 the Romans adopted the dragon banner from the Sarmatians: bronze dragon head from the Niederbieber camp in Germany (after Kemkes/Scheuerbrandt 1997, fig. 56). – 3 depiction of a probably Alanic soldier holding a dragon banner on a gravestone from Chester in Britain (after Wright/Richmond 1955, pl. XXXIV). – 4 arch of Galerius was erected to celebrate the victory over Persians in 297-298; the south-eastern side of the north-western pillar depicts the scene of *adlocutio* with two distinct dragon standards (after Laubschner 1975, pl. 32, 1).

Nagyhegy, or the so-called Sarmatian buckle group<sup>798</sup>. There is a striking increase in the number of sites, providing incontestable proof for the arrival of new population groups in the Carpathian Basin. However, due to the lack of conclusive evidence it remains unclear where the former homeland of this new population had been and which Sarmatian group they represented. Although written sources contain little information in this respect, the newcomers probably included Alanian groups. Proof of this is principally provided by the Sarmatian contingent transferred to Britain, reflected in the links between the military dragon standard (figs 79, 2; 220) and the legends of King Arthur and the Nart Epic<sup>799</sup>.

<sup>798</sup> In fact, the label Szentcs-Nagyhegy group is inaccurate because the eponymous assemblage should be dated later (Kulcsár/Istvánovits 1997, 155).

<sup>799</sup> The gold plaque from Dunaharaszti (fig. 190) furnishes evidence for a possible Alanic presence. Cf. section »A New Wave of Immigrants. The Problem of the Tamgas« for the un-

certainities on the presence of the Alans. The gold plaque from Dunaharaszti (fig. 190) (discussed in detail above) furnishes evidence for a possible Alanic presence. For the link between the Sarmatians transferred to Britain and the Arthurian legends, see section »Sarmatians in the Arthurian Legends?«



**Fig. 221** So-called Sarmatian buckles were in fashion in the Great Hungarian Plain in the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> century: **1** reconstruction drawing (after Vaday/Kulcsár 1984, fig. 8). – **2** reconstruction in the permanent archaeological exhibition »Between East and West« of the HNM, based on the authors' concept (after Óvári et al. n. y., 151). – **3-5. 7** Sarmatian buckles and strap ends from Sződliget-Csörög, Graves 16 and 30 (TIM, V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári). – **6** Sarmatian buckle from Nyiregyháza-Felsősimá, Grave 172 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished; photo G. Boros).

A closer look at the so-called Sarmatian buckles, the period's distinctive find, provides important clues as to the previous homeland of the immigrants. These buckles were first distinguished by Párducz and continued by Vaday and Kulcsár with a survey and evaluation of the known pieces<sup>800</sup>. Most buckles are generally part of a set made up of a large belt-buckle and strap end, and the smaller buckles and strap ends of the footwear. The set occasionally contains a small spur whose straps are divided by »Y«-shaped spacers. The buckle plates and the strap ends are both of the narrow, elongated type (figs 221-222).

Good parallels to these finds can be found among both Roman and eastern Sarmatian costumes (fig. 127)<sup>801</sup>. The main problem is that none of the known analogies include exact counterparts to the buckles, and the general resemblance between them is restricted to their structure and decorative technique (faceting). Nonetheless, it is striking that the appearance of the so-called Sarmatian buckles in the costume coincides with the arrival of new groups from the east.

At the moment, we are not able to give a reliable answer to the question of the newcomers' provenance. A mapping of the eastern connections of the new artefact types will no doubt contribute to a clearer picture of the Sarmatian migrations. Parallels to the so-called knobbed rings, probably a kind of amulet, appearing after the Marcomannic Wars (fig. 195, 2. 5)<sup>802</sup>, are rare in the Don region, but more frequently encountered

<sup>800</sup> Párducz 1956. – Vaday/Kulcsár 1984. A number of similar sets have been brought to light during more recent excavations as well, calling for a fresh look at these artefacts.

<sup>801</sup> Vaday/Kulcsár 1984.

<sup>802</sup> Istvánovits 1984/1986, 102 fig. 7, showing the distribution of these objects over the Hungarian Plain.



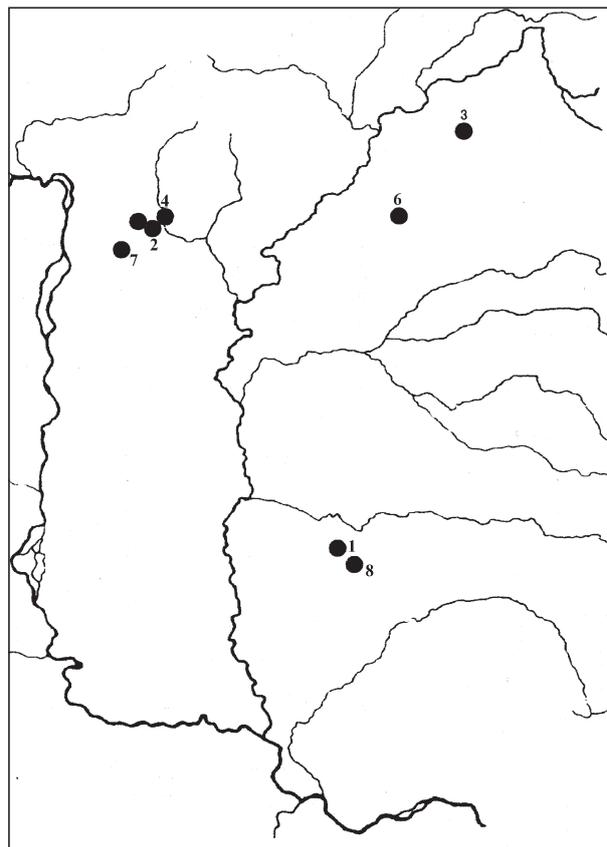
**Fig. 222** Nyíregyháza-Felsősíma, Grave 26: Sarmatian burial with buckles. – (E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).

in the Kuban region and the Caucasus, as well as in the Crimea. Moulds for these objects are known from Olbia and Chersonesus<sup>803</sup>. These analogous finds are all the more noteworthy because amulets can be assigned to the artefacts closely associated with religious beliefs. The systematic mapping and the search for possible steppe parallels remain tasks for future research.

Several finds from the Hungarian Plain suggest that the Sarmatian population (or a part of it), perhaps the group wearing Sarmatian buckles, arriving at the time of the Marcomannic Wars or immediately afterwards,

<sup>803</sup> Zaharov 2000, 36.

originated from the Lower Don region, at least judging from the Azov-Hévízgyörk-Vizesdpuszta group identified by Kulcsár<sup>804</sup>. The graves of this group contained the burials of warriors equipped with similar weapons and horse harness (featuring a specific type of buckle and semi-spherical silver beads) and a sword pommel of semi-precious stone. Imported glass vessels are typical for the burials of this group (fig. 127). Bezuglov linked these burials to the period's elaborately and uniformly equipped warrior aristocracy. The graves show a concentration in two regions during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries: in the South Ural and the Don Delta region<sup>805</sup>. A set with a Sarmatian buckle came to light at Hévízgyörk and Vizesdpuszta (today Vizejdia, Romania), while the assemblage from the vicinity of Azov contained a faceted strap end, resembling the pieces in the Sarmatian buckle sets<sup>806</sup>. Several other late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> century graves are known from the Hungarian Plain whose burial rite (a north to south orientation differing from the customary direction and the mound raised over the grave) and grave goods, including weapons and harness sets, suggest that they can be assigned to the same group of burials. It would seem that these graves represent the heritage of immigrants from the Lower Don region. The sites of the Hévízgyörk-Vizesdpuszta group mostly lie along the northern boundary of the Sarmatian territory on the Hungarian Plain (along the line of the later Csörsz Dyke), perhaps an indication that this group had been entrusted with guarding the border (fig. 223).



**Fig. 223** Sites of the Hévízgyörk-Vizesdpuszta group: **1** Óbeseňyő/Dudești Vechi. – **2** Galgahévíz, Grave 2. – **3** Geszteréd, Grave A. – **4** Hatvan. – **5** Hévízgyörk, Grave 28. – **6** Hortobágy-Poroshát, Grave II. 10. – **7** Isaszeg. – **8** Vizesdpuszta/Vizejdia, Graves 1, 2, 4. – (After Kulcsár 1998b, 77-78 fig. 5).

The mounted troops were equipped with heavy double-edged swords and lances. The 8,000 mounted Sarmatian warriors delivered to Marcus Aurelius after the conclusion of the peace treaty in 175 probably had similar equipment<sup>807</sup>. In addition to the new artefacts brought from the east, the grave of the warrior laid to rest at Hévízgyörk yielded several Germanic objects such as a buckle with a double prong (*Doppeldornschnalle*), an Almgren 129 type brooch (*Einsprossenfibel*) typical for the Przeworsk culture and also Przeworsk-type spearheads, perhaps indicating that their last owner had fought alongside Germanic warriors during the war (fig. 224)<sup>808</sup>.

Several new elements appear in the burial rite and in the material culture after the great wars. After earlier precedents, the custom of enclosing graves with a ditch (figs 184, 225) and the related practice of erecting a mound over burials (fig. 226) became widespread at this time. Graves with an east to west and north to south orientation, differing from the customary south to north alignment, can be found among the burials.

<sup>804</sup> Kulcsár 1998b. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003b, 232-237.

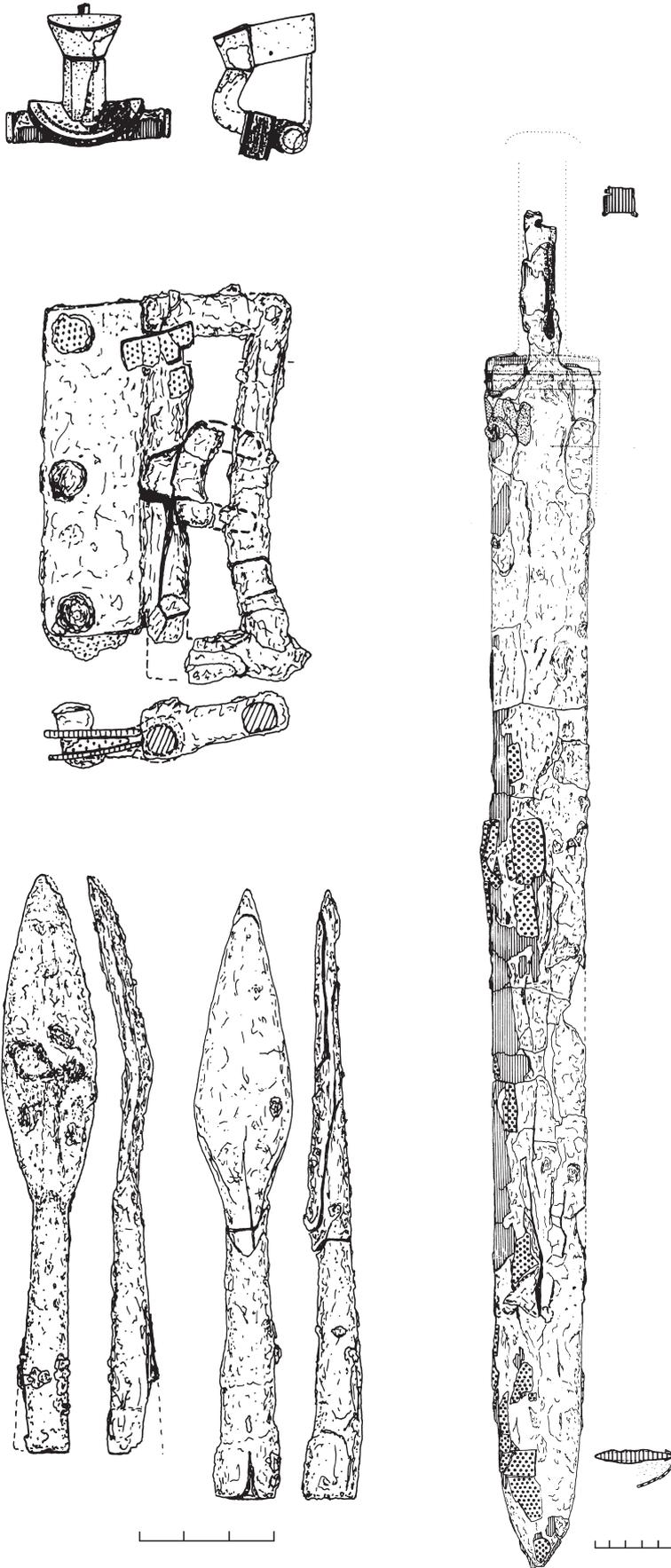
<sup>805</sup> Bezuglov 1997, 137-138.

<sup>806</sup> Bezuglov 1997, fig. 2, 16-17.

<sup>807</sup> The conscription of these mounted warriors is probably also a reflection of Marcus Aurelius' intention to annihilate the

Sarmatians and to create the new province of Sarmatia on the Hungarian Plain by settling new groups (Alföldi 1942a, 198).

<sup>808</sup> Kulcsár 1998b, 75. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003b, 232-234.



**Fig. 224** The sword and Germanic finds of the warrior buried at Hévizgyőr: a buckle with a double prong, a so-called *Einsprossenfibel*, spearheads. – (After Dinnyés 1991, figs 12, 1; 13, 2; 14, 15-16; 16, 9).



**Fig. 225** Ditched graves in the Sarmatian cemetery at Nyíregyháza-Nagy-lapos. – (Photo A. Balázs).

Following an earlier and already attested fashion, the custom of embroidering lower hemlines or shoes with beading also became widely popular (figs 227-229). A similar costume decoration can be noted in the graves of the Budžak Steppe in the Lower Danube region<sup>809</sup>. Interestingly, the beads were not made in the Barbaricum, but in Tibiscum in Dacia, where a bead workshop began its activity in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The workshop's production grew perceptibly after the Marcomannic Wars (fig. 179)<sup>810</sup>. One group of male burials could be distinguished in which the vessels were not deposited by the feet as was customary among the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin, but beside the head. Many graves in this group contained weapons. The orientation of the graves often differed from the usual one: a concentra-

<sup>809</sup> e. g. at Holmskoe, Graves 22 and 24 (Gudkova/Fokeev 1984, 17-19. 21. 29). <sup>810</sup> Benea 1995; 1997; 2004.



**Fig. 226** Sarmatian burial mounds:  
**1** Isaszeg (photo D. Jankovich-Bésán). –  
**2** Galgahévíz (photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

tion of west to east orientated burials could be noted in the Szeged area, while a concentration of south to north and north to south orientated burials in the Upper Tisza region. The best parallels of the latter can be found in the north-western Pontic. Simonenko equated the population burying its dead with the head aligned toward the north with the Roxolani. The grave pottery in these burials was usually deposited beside the head or the hips<sup>811</sup>.

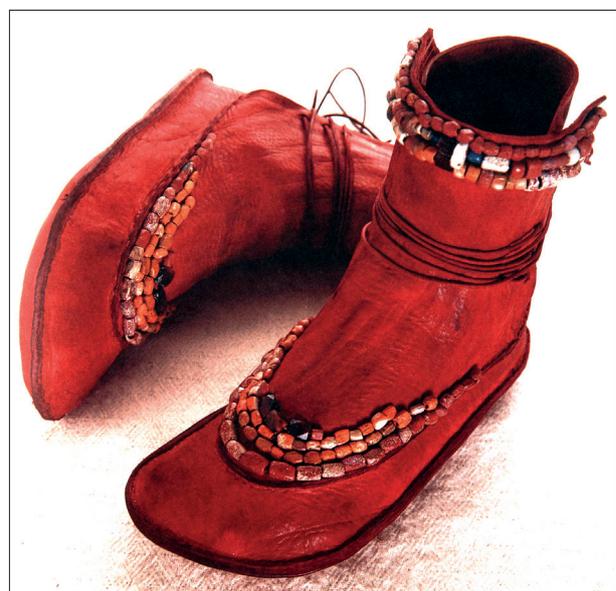
The new steppe groups arriving at the time of the Marcomannic Wars, or immediately afterwards, did not set out from a single region and it seems more likely that we are witnessing the migration or infiltration of several smaller groups. They included members of the mounted warrior elite of the Don Delta, as well as the earlier inhabitants of the Crimea and the north-western Pontic (Budžak Steppe), whose appearance in the Carpathian Basin may have been related to the events leading up to the war.

<sup>811</sup> Kulcsár 1998a, 68. – Simonenko 1991.



**Fig. 227** The costume worn by Sarmatian men and women in the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, in the permanent archaeological exhibition »Between East and West« of the HNM, based on the authors' concept. – (After Hendzsel et al. 2008, figs 3, 3; 5).

Roman imports, such as brooches, *terra sigillatas*, mirrors and other articles, appeared *en masse* in Sarmatian territory from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century onward, alongside the inflow of immense amounts of silver *denarii*. The most popular brooches were the cross-bow brooches of the Sarmatian (or Alföld) type and the enamelled pieces (figs 218, 1-2. 6; 230-231). Colourful glass beads also arrived in great numbers. Taken together, these articles enable the dating of the period's Sarmatian assemblages, the only exceptions being coins, perhaps the largest category of Roman finds from the Barbaricum. Good quality silver coins of the Antonine period still crop up in burials of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Curiously enough, most hoards from Sarmatia were not hidden during the war, but much later, in the earlier 190s on the testimony of the latest pieces – a fact calling for extreme caution in dating.



**Fig. 228** A Sarmatian woman's footwear in the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, in the permanent archaeological exhibition »Between East and West« of the HNM, based on the authors' concept. – (After Óvári et al. n.y., 143).



**Fig. 229** Sarmatian female costume was embroidered by a great number of beads. Colourful glass and polyhedral carnelian beads from Nyíregyháza-Felsősim, Grave 94. – (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).



**Fig. 230** Enamelled brooch in Grave 71 at Nyíregyháza-Felsősim. – (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished).



**Fig. 231** So-called crossbow brooches of Sarmatian type, Üllő, Site 5, Feature 1363 and 6100 and a clay mould from Ecser, Site 7, Feature 4180. – (KM, A. Nagy's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári).

One contentious point in research on Roman-Sarmatian trade is the role of Dacia. Most scholars focus on contacts with Pannonia, even though the mass import of Dacian beads and the possible shipments of iron from that region (see the previous chapter) indicate an important, but hitherto neglected field of research.



**Fig. 232** Auxiliary belt set from Tiszavasvári-Városföldje, Jegyző tag. Roman belt fittings found between beads decorated a female belt. – (JAM; photo G. Boros).

Obviously, Roman artefacts also reached the Sarmatians by means other than trade. An auxiliary belt set from a grave uncovered at Tiszavasvári was no doubt acquired as war booty (fig. 232). This grave find offers a rare view into the intimate private life of a Sarmatian warrior, who apparently presented the set as a gift to his sweetheart – the mounts, applied onto a belt, came to light from a female burial<sup>812</sup>. The dating of

<sup>812</sup> Istvánovits 1984/1986, 85 fig. 4 tab. V.



**Fig. 233** Germanic (Quadic) pottery from Vác-Csörögi rét. – (TIM, V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári).

articles obtained as war booty is slightly more problematic. It is unclear when the above mentioned Victoria statuette from Akasztó (**fig. 199**), the patera handle from Jászszentlászló and the ceremonial armour fragment from Orgovány (**fig. 200**) were acquired by their barbarian owners<sup>813</sup>.

The population living along the northern border of Sarmatia between Pannonia and Dacia was made up of Germanic peoples: the Quadi in the north-west; and groups of the Przeworsk culture, usually identified with the Vandals, up to the border of Dacia (**fig. 219**). The mixing between the Germanic peoples and the Sarmatians can be documented from earlier periods in the Quadian-Sarmatian border zone<sup>814</sup>, and it is also borne out by Roman accounts: »the Sarmatians and the Quadi, two tribes contiguous to each other, and similar in manners and mode of warfare«<sup>815</sup>. The close contact between the two peoples is reflected in the archaeological finds from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries as well. Their settlements have a mosaic patterning in the northern part of the Danube-Tisza interfluvium near the Danube Bend, and the border between the two territories is blurred. The composition of the Germanic and Sarmatian type pottery finds suggests that the Quadi may have advanced as far as the northern outskirts of modern Budapest (**fig. 233**)<sup>816</sup>.

As mentioned, the Sarmatians acquired new neighbours in the north-east after mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century: the Vandal groups of the Przeworsk culture (**fig. 202**). Germanic articles, and especially finds of the Przeworsk culture, appear in the Sarmatian burials: brooches, buckles, vessels from various sites, an »S«-shaped necklace clasp from Jászberény-Csegelapos and a pair of bracelets with shield-shaped terminals (*Schildkopfarmringe*) from

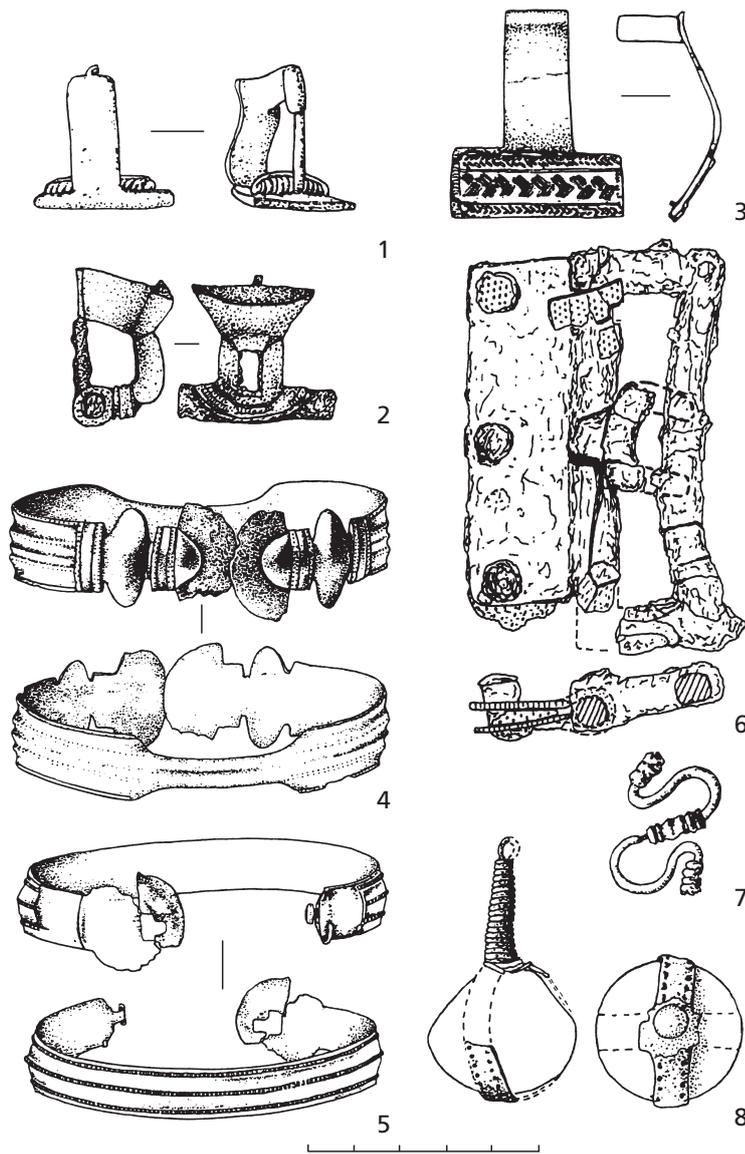
<sup>813</sup> Thomas 1972; 1976a; 1976b.

<sup>814</sup> Kulcsár 1997a. López Sánchez 2007, 102-103, recently suggested that the inter-mingling of the two populations was so intensive that the »foreign rulers«, who, according to Tacitus (*Germ.* 42), followed after the dynasty of Tudrus (the ances-

tral dynasty of the Quadi), may have come from among the Sarmatians and that the REX QUADIS DATUS coins issued in 140 portray a Suebian-Sarmatian king (**fig. 201**).

<sup>815</sup> Ammian XVII.12.1.

<sup>816</sup> Kulcsár 1997a; 1997b.



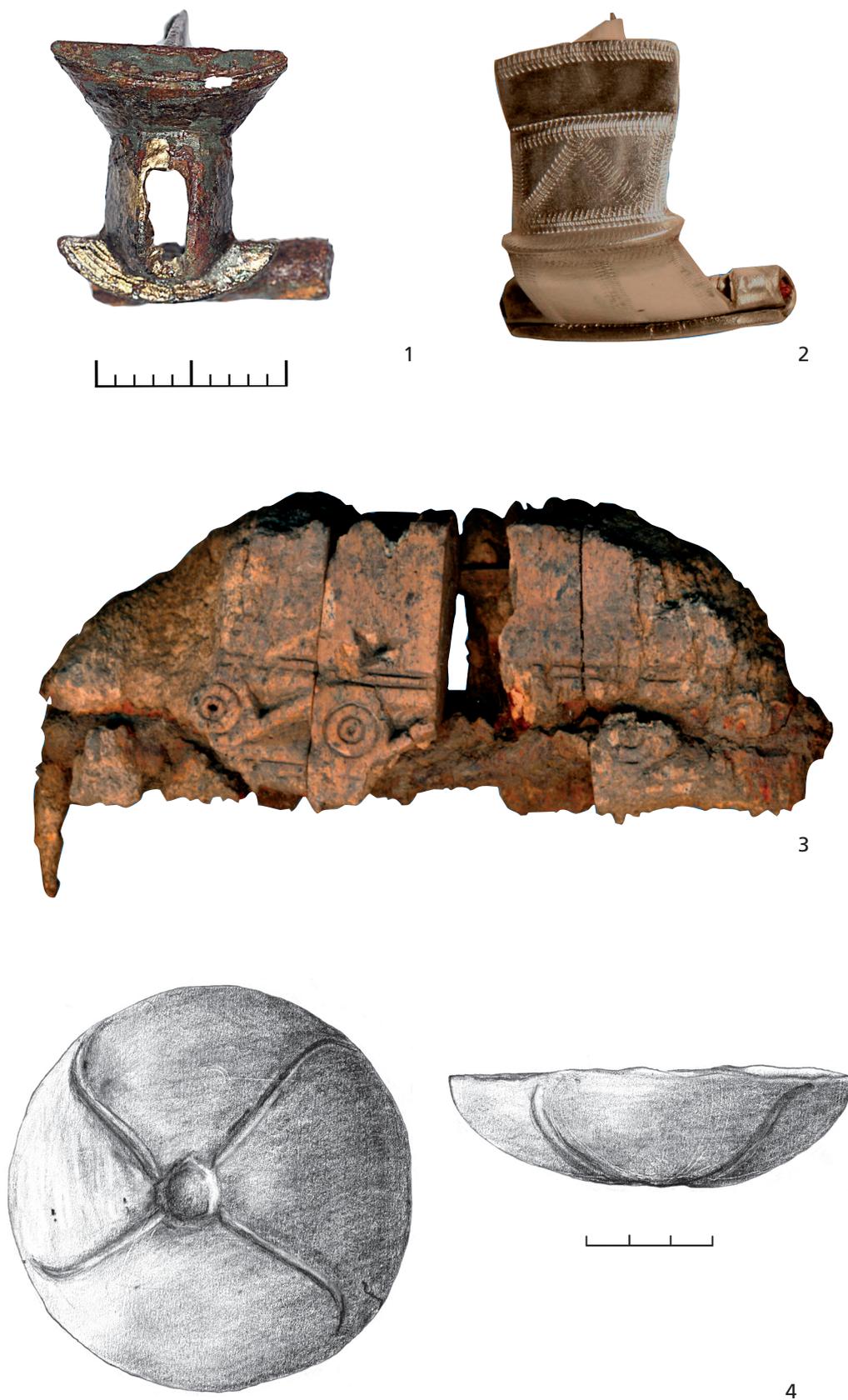
**Fig. 234** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century Germanic finds from Sarmatian burials: **1** T shaped brooch of Almgren's Type 151 from Kenderes (after Vaday 1989b, pl. 43, 3). – **2** T shaped brooch of Almgren's Type 151 from Szolnok-Szanda (after Vaday 1989b, pl. 101, 1). – **3** so-called *Einsprossenfibel* of Almgren's Type 129 from Tiszavasvári (after Istvánovits 1984/1986, pl. 2, 1). – **4-5** snake-terminal bracelets from Veresegyház (after Mesterházy 1986, fig. 4). – **6** buckles with double prongs from Hévizgyörk (after Dinnyés 1991, fig. 13, 2). – **7** S shaped necklace hook from Jászberény-Csege-lapos (after Vaday 1989b, pl. 34, 3). – **8** spherical, framed pendants from Törökszentmiklós (after Vaday 1989b, pl. 131, 6).

Gelénes, reflecting both trade contacts and the co-mingling of the two peoples<sup>817</sup>. It is hardly surprising that finds of this type occur in greater number in the contact zone between them (figs 234-236).

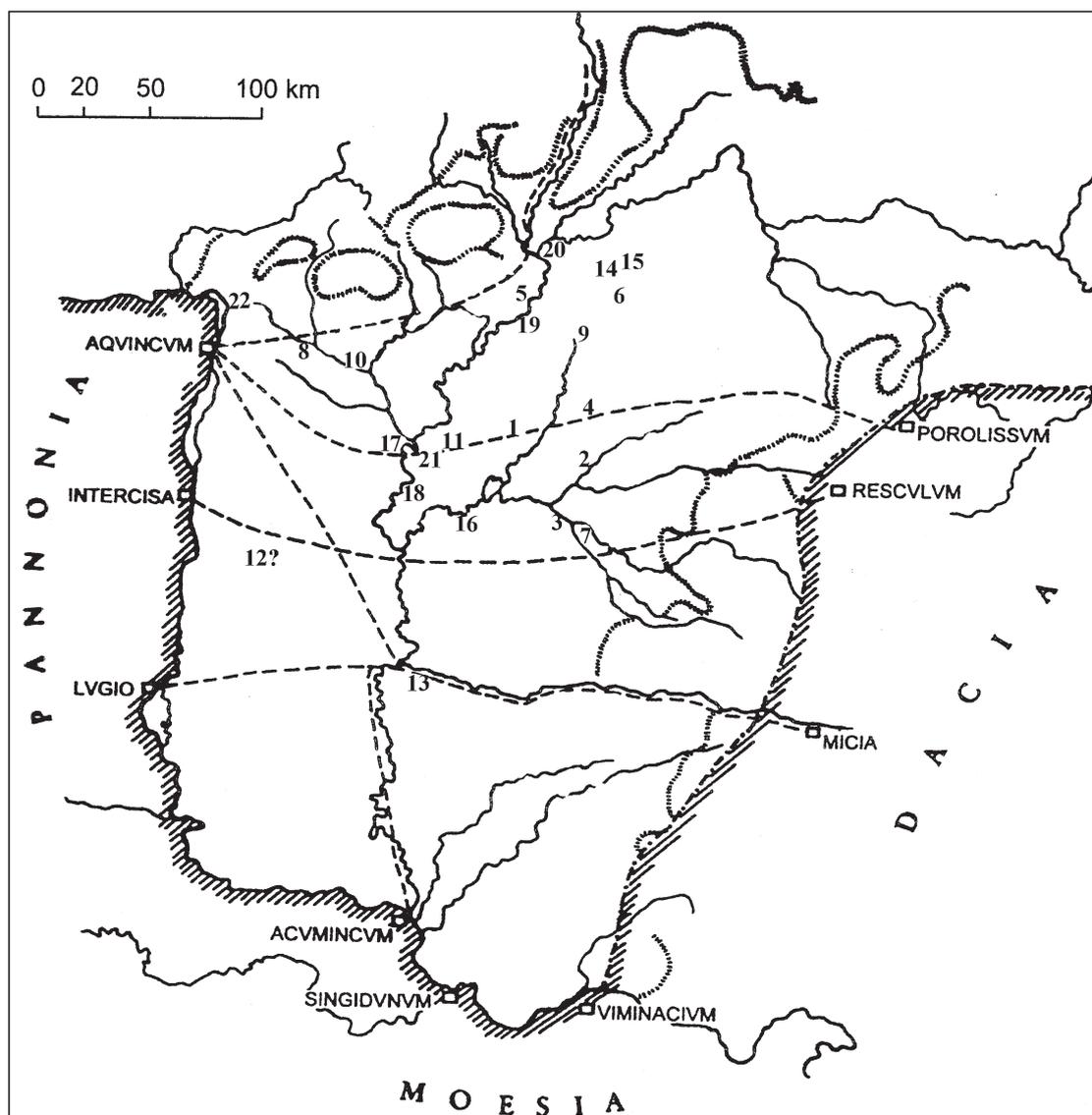
The presence of Germanic artefacts on the Hungarian Plain fits in with the tendency outlined by the written sources during the great war, namely, that the Sarmatians often burst into the Empire in league with their Germanic neighbours. One of the priorities in Marcus Aurelius' military policy was to separate the different barbarian peoples – principally the Marcomanni, the Quadi and the Sarmatians – and so vanquish and pacify them separately. This is one of the reasons that the terms of the peace treaties differ<sup>818</sup>. It yet remains to be established whether, in addition to other factors, the differences in the Roman imports reaching the Germanic and Sarmatian lands – diverse *sigillata* types, the number of bronze and silver vessels – were a reflection of this differential treatment.

<sup>817</sup> Vaday 1980; 1987; 1989b, 236 cat. no. 34. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1994a; 2000; 2003b.

<sup>818</sup> For a discussion of Dio's report, see Alföldi 1942a, 200.



**Fig. 235** Objects of Germanic character found in Sarmatian context: **1** Tiszavasvári-Városvölgye, Jegyző-tető, Grave 7 (JAM). – **2** Nyíregyháza-Császárszállás, Halomi-dűlő, Grave 23 (JAM, E. Istvánovits's excavation, unpublished). – **3** Tiszavasvári-Városvölgye, Jegyző-tető, Grave 37 (JAM). – **4** Monor-Berek. – (After Kulcsár 2001, fig. 3, 2).



**Fig. 236** Distribution of Przeworsk objects found on Sarmatian territory: 1 Báránd. – 2 Berettyóújfalu-Herpály. – 3 Békés-Vizesbánom. – 4 Derecske. – 5 Gelej. – 6 Geszteréd. – 7 Gyulavári. – 8 Hévízgyörk. – 9 Hortobágy. – 10 Jászberény-Csegelapos. – 11 Kenderes. – 12 Kiskőrös. – 13 Kiszombor. – 14 Nyíregyháza-Felsősim. – 15 Nyíregyháza-Oros, Auchan. – 16 Szarvas-Lómer halom. – 17 Szolnok-Szanda. – 18 Tiszaföldvár. – 19 Tiszafüred. – 20 Tiszavasvári. – 21 Törökszentmiklós. – 22 Veresegyház. – (After Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2000, fig. 1 supplemented by no. 4: kind information of L. Szolnoki, nos 14-15: unpublished excavation of E. Istvanovits and team).

While artefacts of the neighbouring Przeworsk culture occur regularly in the Sarmatian grave assemblages, surprisingly few are known from the Sarmatian settlements and no more than a handful of Sarmatian articles crop up across the entire Vandal settlement territory. The Sarmatians appear to have remained unaffected by the mixed Dacian-Germanic assemblages of the Upper Tisza region, principally represented by the typical finds from the early levels of the sites Csengersima/Petea and Beregsurány<sup>819</sup>. No contact whatsoever is apparent with more distant neighbours, such as the Carpathian Barrows culture – whose ethnic make-up is strongly controversial, although the Dacians seem to be the most likely candidates – despite the

<sup>819</sup> Istvánovits 1993b; 1997; 2004. – Gindele/Istvánovits 2009, 45-66.

fact that the extent of their settlement territory can be farther extended to the west in the light of a burial of this cultural complex discovered recently near Csengersima (fig. 204)<sup>820</sup>.

Whilst the Quadian neighbourhood is reflected in the settlement finds, the vicinity of the Przeworsk culture is indicated by grave assemblages, both of which offer some insight into the nature of the contacts. Relations were obviously stronger in the contact zone than in the heartland of the respective settlement territories. However, it is still uncertain where the exact boundaries of the Sarmatian lands lay, if one can speak of a clearly defined border at all. A Sarmatian buckle has been reported from Carei in the north-east. A single stray find might be regarded as a random occurrence, were it not for the fact that an increasing number of Sarmatian settlement finds have been brought to light by Romanian research.

The great war brought a radical change in the ethnic make-up of the Barbaricum in the Carpathian Basin, which in turn also affected relations between the Romans and the barbarian peoples. The advance of the Germanic peoples and the »barbarisation« of the Roman army foreshadowed the decline of the Empire. Marcus Aurelius was the last Roman emperor who had a clear vision of the long-term military and political settlement of the Danubian provinces. The subsequent fate of the Sarmatians on the Hungarian Plain was determined, to at least the same extent, by their Germanic neighbours as it was by the Romans.

## FROM THE MARCOMANNIC WARS TO THE EVACUATION OF DACIA

### After the Marcomannic Wars

Relatively little is known about the events of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. There are many difficulties in establishing what had actually happened, the main reasons being the problems encountered in the dating of the archaeological material (which is especially true regarding 3<sup>rd</sup> century assemblages) and the absence of written sources. The latter is hardly surprising given the »global crisis« of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, amply reflected by seventy emperors ruling during the fifty years between 235 and 284<sup>821</sup>. Roman writers were far more preoccupied with what went on in Rome than with foreign policy.

The end of the Marcomannic Wars brought a period of relative peace to the Carpathian Basin, not least owing to successful peace negotiations (and perhaps the mass settlement of various groups in the province) and no doubt owing to the military re-organisations along the *limes* sections facing the Sarmatians.

However, the calm was relative. That it was far from complete is best illustrated by the many coin hoards hidden in the Barbaricum during this period. The latest coin in the Mende hoard was struck in 195, the latest coins in the Elek and Miskolc hoards in 193, while the latest coin in hoard II from Kecel was minted sometime between 193 and 195<sup>822</sup>. The hoard discovered at Tiszaföldvár-Ókincsemhegy<sup>823</sup>, the two hoards from Ghirişa (County Satu Mare in Romania) whose latest coins were minted in 193 and 201 respectively, and the hoard found at Teceu Mic (County Maramureş, Romania)<sup>824</sup> can also be assigned to this period.

Consolidation came around spring 197 when, following the civil war and the defeat of Clodius, Ti. Claudius Claudianus was appointed governor of Pannonia Inferior. The Severan period brought prosperity to Pannonia and, undoubtedly, the domestic political stability also meant peace along the province's borders. Several

<sup>820</sup> Rusanova 1993, 179-181. We are greatly indebted to A. Jakab (Nyíregyháza) for the data on the unpublished finds from the excavations at Csengersima in 2009. The finds from this site provide additional evidence for dynamic contacts between the Germanic peoples and the Romans.

<sup>821</sup> Alföldi 1967. – Demandt 2007, esp. 37.

<sup>822</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 516, with further literature. – Fitz 1958, 165.

<sup>823</sup> Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 42.

<sup>824</sup> Matei/Stanciu 2000, 48. 82.



**Fig. 237** Bone plaques of the bows used by Syrian archers and the bone suspension loop of a sword used by mounted soldiers from the Roman auxiliary camp at Ulcisia Castra (Szentendre). – (After Maróti 2008, figs 6. 9).

construction projects were begun along the *limes* and it is possible that the *limes* along the Olt was established at this time<sup>825</sup>. A new archery unit, the *cohors I milliaria nova Severiana Surorum sagittaria equitata* (figs 237-238) was transferred from the east to the Danubian border: the 1,000 strong troop of Syrians garrisoned in Ulcisia Castra could efficiently combat the Sarmatians. This unit probably played a similar role along the northern section of the Sarmatian *limes* as the *cohors I Aurelia Antonina milliaria Hemesenorum sagittaria equitata* stationed in Intercisa in the south<sup>826</sup>.

Barkóczy has suggested that Septimius Severus' visit to Pannonia in 202 may have been prompted by the protracted unrest among the barbarians east of the Danube, caused by the Goths' eastward migration, and that the route of this north to south Germanic trek is outlined by the roughly contemporaneous coin hoards from Moldavia and the Dniester-Dnieper interfluvium. Dislodged from their lands, the Carpi are also assumed to have contributed to the commotion in the Carpathian Basin<sup>827</sup>. It must, in all fairness, be noted that there is little in the archaeological record to support this suggestion and neither can it be confirmed by the written sources. Nonetheless, it is certain that the Gothic migration had affected the western areas of the steppe Sarmatian lands during this period. However, there is nothing to indicate a direct impact of the Germanic population movement on the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain, mostly because there is not much evidence concerning the relation between the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin and the steppe. The Germanic elements/influences in the archaeological material (figs 234-236. 239) are more a reflection of contact with the neighbouring Marcomannic, Quadic and Vandalic groups<sup>828</sup>.

The instability following Septimius Severus' death was reflected along the Empire's frontier. The barbarians probably raided the province in 212-213. However, the sources only report Caracalla's punitive expedition

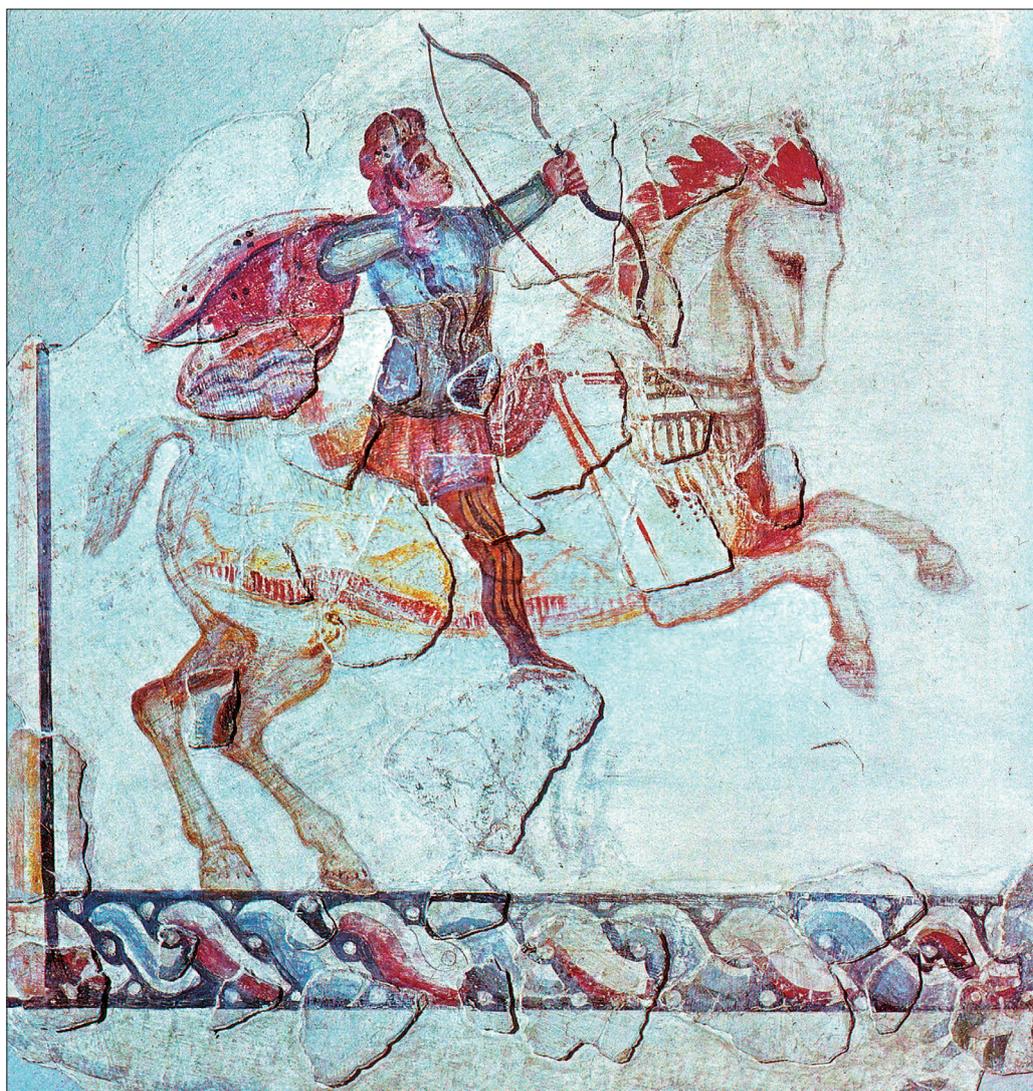
<sup>825</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 671. – Fitz 1958, 166.

<sup>826</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 671. – Maróti 2003, 5. – Lőrincz 2003, 29-30. Cf. Herodian VI.7.8: »Alexander had brought with him many Moroccan javelin men and a huge force of archers from the East and from the Osroenian country, together with Parthian deserters and mercenaries who had offered their help; with

these he prepared to battle the Germans.« Herodian noted that troops mounting an attack from a distance were more effective against the Germans, who were equal to the Romans in close combat.

<sup>827</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 516-517.

<sup>828</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1994a; 2000; 2003b.



**Fig. 238** 3<sup>rd</sup> century wall painting depicting a mounted archer from the military camp of Aquincum. – (After Aquincum n. y., fig. 29).

against the Germans<sup>829</sup>, making it unclear whether the Sarmatians also participated in the incursion. The reorganisation of the defences along the Pannonian *limes* continued, as seen by road reparations and military constructions along the entire frontier between Vindobona and Burgenae, which were only interrupted in 218. The northern Dacian *limes* was likewise reinforced during this period<sup>830</sup>.

The reconstruction of 3<sup>rd</sup> century events is essentially based on circumstantial evidence because the reports in the written sources become increasingly irregular<sup>831</sup>. For the span of about one generation, we do not hear of major Sarmatian incursions in the Danube region, although this should not necessarily be interpreted as absolute peace. Probable evidence of repeated Sarmatian raids may be found in the coin hoards from Börgönd (near Székesfehérvár) and from Ercsi, whose latest coins were issued in 228 and 231, respectively. Herodian reported that »the provinces of Illyricum bordering on and close to Italy were in danger«,

<sup>829</sup> Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 42-43.

<sup>830</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 518-519. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 43.

<sup>831</sup> The single and admittedly rather unreliable source for the period between 229 and 238 is Herodian (Kovács 2007, 37).



**Fig. 239** Pottery of Germanic character found in Sarmatian contexts: **1** Ecsér, Site 7, Feature 5081. – **2** Üllő, Site 5, Feature 7095. – (KM, V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári).

suggesting a joint action by the Quadi and Sarmatians<sup>832</sup>. The coin hoard discovered at Kisdém-puszta in 1810 (whose existence was forgotten and has only now been re-published) raises the possibility that the unrest among the barbarians had begun earlier, around 223<sup>833</sup>.

The epithet *Sarmaticus maximus* taken by Maximinus Thrax in 237 is perhaps an indication of renewed upheavals. The emperor stayed in Sirmium between 236 and 238, where, as we are told, »he went [...] with the intention of waging war against the Sarmatians«<sup>834</sup>. This passage in the *Historia Augusta* was quoted from Herodian; however, according to Kovács, he condensed the events to the extent that »the chronology of the Sarmatian-Dacian war became wholly muddled«<sup>835</sup>. It is generally assumed that Maximinus Thrax deployed Pannonian troops against the Sarmatians and the free Dacians around 236 somewhere in Dacia. It seems more likely, but cannot be firmly supported, that the Sarmatians in questions were the lazyges from the Hungarian Plain because there is evidence for clashes in the Lower Danube region as well. It is possible that both regions were affected by barbarian raids<sup>836</sup>. In 238, the emperor perhaps planned another campaign against the Sarmatians, but nothing came of it<sup>837</sup>. The upheavals can be ascribed to the Gothic advance: according to Herodian, in 237-238, Maximinus Thrax »threatened [...] to defeat and subjugate the German nations as far as the ocean«. Petrus Patricius (frag. 8) reported that the Goths had received annual *stipendia* from 238<sup>838</sup>. The location of the events mentioned in connection with the Sarmatians is vague from this period onward. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether an incursion or raid had oc-

<sup>832</sup> Herodian VI.7.2. – Barkóczy 1957, 522-523.

<sup>833</sup> Prohászka 2005, 72. Seven of the 53 coins mentioned in the original report cannot be determined. It is possible that the hoard also included later pieces, meaning that it had been concealed in the late 220s or early 230s.

<sup>834</sup> SHA Maxim. XIII.3.

<sup>835</sup> Kovács 2008, 9. 34.

<sup>836</sup> Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 44, with the earlier literature; Barkóczy 1957, 523-524, argued that the raids against the province were mounted from eastern Hungary because of the fact that

the troops received the epithet from the emperor following major campaigns and that troops with the epithet *Maximina* show a concentration along the Sarmatian frontier. However, we know that the Gothic thrust to the Pontic caused disturbances in the Lower Danube region, too. The hoards whose latest coins are represented by pieces struck under Gordian hidden in southern Dacia are regarded as evidence for incursions along the Oltenian *limes*.

<sup>837</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 671. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 44.

<sup>838</sup> Herodian VII.2.9. – Alföldi 1967, 315.

curred east or west of Dacia. In some cases, the place of the events reported in the sources is obvious, as in the case of the intrusion on the Lower Danube in 242. While making preparations for a massive Persian campaign, Gordian III was forced to remain in the Danube region because the Sarmatians, the Goths and the Alans had swarmed across the Danube and advanced as far as Philippopolis, retreating only after they found themselves facing formidable imperial forces. The Persian expedition could only be launched after these peoples had been expelled<sup>839</sup>.

### The Evacuation of Dacia

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, during their southward migration from the north, the Germanic peoples (principally the Goths) eventually reached the northern Pontic, precipitating the westward and eastward movement of Sarmatian groups. Here we shall focus on the westward migration that obviously affected the Carpathian Basin's history. Pressed by the Goths, the Carpi (a tribe related to the Dacians) on the left Danube bank fell upon their neighbours, among them the Roxolani<sup>840</sup>. The westernmost steppe tribes again attempted to enter the Carpathian Basin. The date of the Carpic attacks is indicated by the virtual halt of monetary circulation in Dacia in Philip the Arab's time. A similar process can be noted in Dacia as in Pannonia after Valentinian I's death 130 years later<sup>841</sup>.

Dexippus' report that the Marcomanni had again devastated western Pannonia (probably not for the first time), during Valerian's ascent and concurrent with the Balkan campaign, has been preserved by Zosimus. The Marcomanni advanced as far as Ravenna along the road from Pannonia to Italy<sup>842</sup>. The sources made no mention of the Sarmatians, suggesting that they had perhaps kept their distance this time. In the 250s, however, the Romans were constantly engaged in repelling successive Sarmatian incursions. Between 253 and 260, Valerian and Gallienus, the two co-emperors, were forced to deploy the army simultaneously on the Persian front, against the Anatolian pirates, and to protect Gaul, which had been ravaged by the Franks, thus weakening the frontiers of the Danubian provinces. The Sarmatians seized the opportunity to raid the province for booty. Sensing the danger, the army proclaimed Ingenuus emperor in 258 or 260. The author of the *Historia Augusta* opined that »in the face of an inroad of the Sarmatians, they chose as their emperor one who by his valour could bring a remedy to the exhausted state«<sup>843</sup>. Usurpers arose in every corner of the Empire: »It was the public destiny that in the time of Gallienus whosoever could, sprang up to seize the imperial power«<sup>844</sup>. Ingenuus' revolt in the Danube region was followed by the rise of another usurper to the throne: Regalianus. His brief career was described in the *Historia Augusta*:

[Regalianus] performed many brave deeds against the Sarmatians, but nevertheless, at the instigation of the Roxolani [...] and with the consent of the soldiers and the provincials, who feared that Gallienus might, on a second occasion, act even more cruelly, he [Regalianus] was put to death<sup>845</sup>.

Most Hungarian scholars interpret this passage as implying that the usurper Regalianus and his army were annihilated by a large-scale Roxolanian attack in 260 somewhere near Sirmium. The Roxolani, who had

<sup>839</sup> Kulakovskij 2003, 150.

<sup>840</sup> Alföldi 1940a, 48-51.

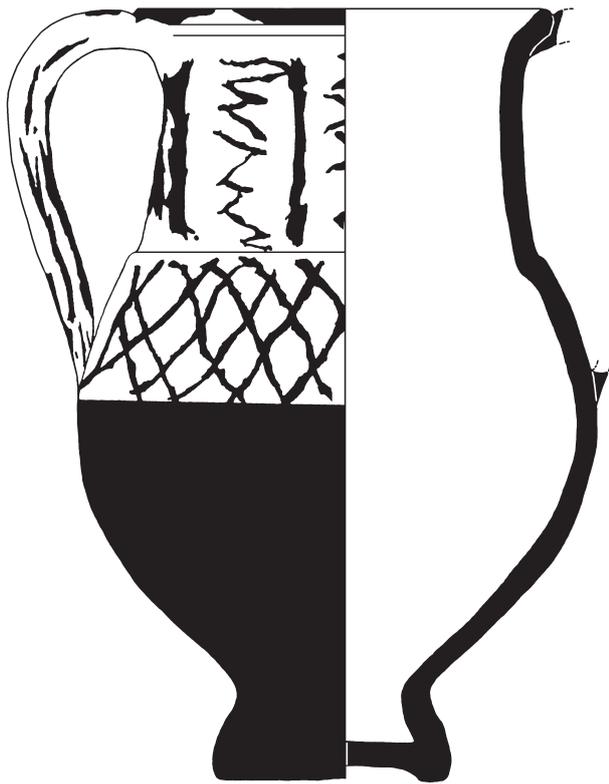
<sup>841</sup> Alföldi 1943b, 18. – Bóna 2001, 141. Coin circulation did not cease altogether; this only came to pass during Aurelian's reign.

<sup>842</sup> Zosimus I.29.2. – Alföldi 1929, 162-163. 176. 180.

<sup>843</sup> SHA Trig.Tyr. IX.1. For the debate concerning Ingenuus' ascension, see Kovács 2008, 39, with the relevant literature.

<sup>844</sup> SHA Trig.Tyr. X.1.

<sup>845</sup> SHA Trig.Tyr. X.2.



**Fig. 240** Vessel with smoothed decoration containing the coin hoard concealed at Baláca in 259-260. – (After Bíró/Ágoston 1983, fig. 5).

259-260, is long overdue. The location of the events to Moesia is similarly doubtful because the quoted passage of the *Historia Augusta* could equally well be associated with Pannonia – in other words, this reasoning can likewise be rejected.

Returning to the events of 259-260, one point that emerges clearly is that Pannonia found itself in an extremely grave situation, in part owing to the barbarian raids and in part to the civil war. This is demonstrated by approximately 30 hoards concealed at this time, of which the one found at Szalacska is the largest. The earlier known coin hoards are complemented by the one from Baláca, comprising 86 coins of which the latest was minted in 259, deposited in a vessel with smoothed decoration (fig. 240). Two other coin hoards, each placed in a vessel, were discovered at Biatorbágy during the more recent excavation of a villa destroyed by fire. The *antoniniani* of Gallienus struck in 260 were the latest coins in one hoard. The southward route of the barbarians ravaging the province is marked by the destroyed settlements, such as Intercisa and Gorsium, and by the concealed hoards down to the river Mura<sup>848</sup>. The catastrophe befalling the province is reflected by destruction layers along the *limes* and in the province's interior (the settlement

supposedly just settled in the Hungarian Plain, are believed to have participated in the events<sup>846</sup>. However, the interpretation of Regalianus' victory against the Sarmatians as proof for the migration of the Roxolani to the Hungarian Plain can be rejected because the passage in question is rather ambiguous. It has also been suggested that the battle did not take place in Pannonia, but in Moesia (Scupi). Another counter-argument is that nowhere else does the *Historia Augusta* refer to the presence of the Roxolani on the Hungarian Plain<sup>847</sup>.

At the same time, the archaeological record supports the arrival of new Sarmatian groups, even though the exact date of their migration remains unknown. It must also be borne in mind that while the appearance of the Roxolani on the Hungarian Plain can theoretically be dated to a much earlier period, all the other sources relating to the Carpathian Basin similarly lack any references to the Roxolani. Until the appearance of the Huns, the sources only mention the *azyges* or Sarmatians. In other words, a critical re-assessment of a long-standing cliché of Hungarian research, namely that the arrival of the Roxolani should be expressly linked to the events of

<sup>846</sup> Alföldi 1954, 73. – Barkóczi 1957, 527-531; 1959, suggested that the Britanic *vexillatio* mentioned in the Drava-Sava interfluvium in an inscription from Sirmium (CIL III.3228) was deployed owing to the re-settlement of the Roxolani. See also Harmatta 1970, 55. The sequence of the events, less relevant to Sarmatian history, was re-evaluated by Fitz 1966, quoting all the relevant sources.

<sup>847</sup> Kovács 2008, 41, with the relevant literature.

<sup>848</sup> Alföldi 1954, 72-73. – Radnóti 1954, 496. – Fitz 1966, 49. – Mócsy 1974, 264. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 45, with further literature. See also Albeker/Bíró/Ágoston 1969/1970. – Bíró/Ágoston 1983. For the Biatorbágy hoard, see Miklósi Szőke 2008. The attack was not directed solely against Pannonia; it seems likely that some forays had been made into Dacia from the Hungarian Plain, as well, as indicated by a coin hoard found at Diosig (County Bihor, Romania), whose latest coin was minted in 258-259 (Ighat/Bulzan 1997, 488. 497).



**Fig. 241** *Antoninianus* with the legend DACIA FELIX issued by Aurelian in 270 (RIC V 108).

at Tác, the camp and *vicus* at Albertfalva, and a series of other sites). The damage was far more extensive and far more devastating than that during the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars. Many years elapsed before the province fully recovered<sup>849</sup>.

Unlike Pannonia, the situation in Dacia had become truly precarious during the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century owing to constant pressure from the east. One hardship followed another. There was a constant Germanic onslaught against the barely defensible province until the situation became critical<sup>850</sup>. Examination of the coins enables the reconstruction of how the province was evacuated. In 270, Aurelian issued a series of coins with the legend DACIA FELIX (fig. 241), reflecting his intention of defending the province from the barbarian incursions. Even though he defeated the Visigoths in Transylvania in 271, he still decided to evacuate the province after his successful campaign, the main reason for this being that Palmyra had occupied Egypt, the Empire's breadbasket. No matter that Aurelian had evicted the Goths from Moesia and Thrace, no matter that he had marched to Dacia and won a decisive battle in which Cannabaudes, the Gothic leader had lost his life, he was unable to follow up this victory in Dacia. He had no choice but to despatch the Danubian army to Egypt against Zenobia, the Palmyrian queen, otherwise Rome's wheat supply would have been severely threatened<sup>851</sup>. The emperor evacuated Dacia, abandoning the region to its fate.

These events obviously brought a radical change in the life of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian Basin. They faced new neighbours in the east: the Tervingi, the »forest dwelling« Goths, who had penetrated Transylvania. It must also be borne in mind that Tyras and Olbia, the two Pontic towns through which much of the Sarmatians' trade was conducted, was also occupied by the Goths<sup>852</sup>.

The *Historia Augusta* informs us that »Aurelian, too, during that same time, fought with the greatest vigour against the Suebi and the Sarmatians and won a most splendid victory«, and that »he was [...] called [...] Sarmaticus«<sup>853</sup>. The emperor had indeed received this title as demonstrated by an inscription in which he appears as *Sarmaticus*<sup>854</sup>, indicating that Aurelian had defeated the Sarmatians in battle. It is unclear where the battle actually took place: in Pannonia, in the province's foreland; or somewhere in the Lower Danube region. A clash in Pannonia seems more likely, considering that the Sarmatians are mentioned together with

<sup>849</sup> Barkóczy 1957, 527. – Fitz 1982, 61. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 44-45.

<sup>850</sup> Bóna 2001, 140-141.

<sup>851</sup> Alföldi 1929, 163; 1940a, 52-53; 1943a, 75-76; 1943b, 20.

<sup>852</sup> Harmatta 1950, 11. – Bóna 2001, 140-141.

<sup>853</sup> SHA Aur. XXXIII.2, XXX.5. The passage on Claudius Gothicus in the SHA (Claud. XVIII.1) presumably refers to the same event (Alföldy 1966a, 5-6). In his commentary to a recent Hungarian

translation of the *Historia Augusta*, Takács 2003, 623 n. 25, raised the possibility that the Suebi in question can be identified with the Juthungi living along the upper reaches of the Danube. This interpretation was accepted by Kovács 2008, 47, who also cited Aurelian's triumphal procession (SHA Aur. XXXIII.4), in which the Suebi and the Vandals are mentioned separately.

<sup>854</sup> CIL III.12333.

the Suebi. However, this piece of information must be treated with caution because Dexippus' vivid account suggests that Aurelian had in fact battled with the Vandals. Similarly, Zosimus' Scythians can probably be identified with the Vandals<sup>855</sup>:

Aurelianus, having regulated the empire, went from Rome to Aquileia, and from thence into Pannonia, which he was informed the Scythians were preparing to invade. For this reason he sent orders to the inhabitants of that country to carry into the towns all their corn and cattle, and every thing that could be of use to the enemy, in order to distress them with famine, with which they were already afflicted. The Barbarians having crossed the river into Pannonia had an engagement, the result of which was nearly equal. But the same night, the Barbarians re-crossed the river, and as soon as day appeared, sent ambassadors to treat for peace<sup>856</sup>.

In his assessment of the sources on Pannonia, Kovács suggested that mention of the Sarmatians might be justified on the grounds that the Sarmatians could also join forces with the Vandals<sup>857</sup>. The description of the triumphal procession in the *Historia Augusta* is of little help in clarifying the confusion because Goths, Alans, Roxolani, Sarmatians, Franks, Suebi, Vandals and Germans all appear among the prisoners<sup>858</sup>.

We know that soon after his ascension to the throne, Aurelian travelled to Pannonia, where he made the necessary preparations for repelling the barbarian attack. It is open to debate whether there had indeed been an attack by the Vandals who had been ousted from their former lands by the Gepids in the summer of 270 as posited in the reconstruction of the events by the period's eminent scholars (Schmidt, Alföldi, Mócsy)<sup>859</sup>. According to this hypothesis, the Sarmatians (and perhaps the Suebi) joined forces with the Vandals. Following Aurelian's arrival in the theatre of war and his decisive victory, the barbarians handed over 2,000 soldiers and hostages in accordance with the terms of the peace treaty. The emperor took the title *Sarmaticus* at this time<sup>860</sup>. Curiously enough, the emperor's titles (Gothicus, Sarmaticus, Armenicus, Parthicus, Adiabenicus<sup>861</sup>) do not include Germanicus, which should be the case had the unrest indeed begun among the Vandals.

Another moot point is whether the Gepids settled in the Upper Tisza region and occupied the earlier Vandal territory after the evacuation of Dacia. This assumption is based on a single passage<sup>862</sup> that is not borne out by the archaeological evidence<sup>863</sup>.

Some barbarian attacks are suggested by the archaeological material. One of these is a destruction level in Aquincum dated to 275<sup>864</sup>. The *Historia Augusta* mentioned Sarmatian forays in the year 279<sup>865</sup>. Sometime after Probus' death, probably in 282, Carus successfully concluded the campaign against the Sarmatians, »who were so emboldened by Probus' death that they threatened to invade not only Illyricum but Thrace and Italy as well«<sup>866</sup>. Judging from a hoard of 4,000 coins in Sirmium, the fighting affected Pannonia Inferior. Carus, who was more concerned with the ongoing Persian campaign, dispatched a formidable army

855 Alföldy 1966a, 5-6. – Kovács 2008, 45-46. 59.

856 Zosimus I.48.1-2.

857 Kovács 2008, 45.

858 SHA Aur. XXXIII.4.

859 Alföldi 1940b, 172; 1942a, 672. – Schmidt 1941, 223. 530. – Mócsy 1974, 209-211. In their view, the Gepids' movements also had repercussions in the Sarmatian territory. In Alföldi's view these should be dated later, when the Vandals shifted toward the Maros-Körös region.

860 Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 45.

861 SHA Aur. XXX.5.

862 Jordan XVII.98. – Kiss 2002, 135-137 n. 114.

863 For the theory, see e.g. Bóna 2001, 173-175; for its refusal, see e.g. Istvánovits 1998; 2000. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1999. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Bierbrauer 2006, with the earlier literature.

864 Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 45.

865 SHA Prob. XVI.2.

866 SHA Car. VIII.1, IX.4. Carus' victory over the Sarmatians is mentioned by Eutrop. IX.18.1. – Zon. 12,30. – Sync. 386d. – Jordan Rom. 294.

against the Sarmatians to ensure a speedy victory. The Sarmatians do not appear to have been particularly intimidated because a few years later Diocletian led a series of punitive expeditions against them and the *limes* also had to be reinforced<sup>867</sup>.

From the Roman perspective, the Sarmatians had become extremely dangerous neighbours after the evacuation of Dacia. This is reflected by the growing number of barbarian incursions and the growing range of their forays into the province.

### The Archaeological Finds

From the beginning, one distinctive feature of Sarmatian research in Hungary has been that any definition of the boundaries between successive chronological horizons was based on a correlation with the events recorded in the written sources. However, it is obvious that period boundaries such as the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars and the evacuation of Dacia did not necessarily result in an immediate and profound change in the material culture. We do not think that a revision of the approach hallmarked by Párducz and Harmatta, during the roughly one hundred years of research on the Sarmatians, is a priority because the »historical milestones« identified by them also marked a change in the population density and, probably, the ethnic composition of the population on the Hungarian Plain. These changes along with the military events, as well as the alternation of the neighbouring peoples (especially of the Germanic tribes), led to the emergence of new forms of interaction. At the same time, only the main tendencies of these changes can be outlined. Boundaries are not sharp and we can hardly speak of a radical transformation in material culture (**figs 242-243**). There can be no doubt about the continuity of the population living on the Hungarian Plain, in which the heritage and customs of the new immigrant groups from the east can be barely distinguished.

One palpable change is the gradual decrease of Roman imports in the Barbaricum's heartland from the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century onward, after the Marcomannic Wars. Vaday explained this decline by suggesting that the Empire had lost control over the Sarmatian Barbaricum<sup>868</sup>. It is dubious, however, whether control of this type had ever existed. This seems most unlikely given the events of the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars and their aftermath. What, then, is the reason for the decline of Roman imports in the Barbaricum? The emphasis should not be placed on the decreasing number of imports across the Hungarian Plain, but rather on the fact that trade between the Romans and the Sarmatians had reverted to the level preceding the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars. The striking amount of imports in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries can be obviously linked to Marcus Aurelius' intention of creating the province of Sarmatia and the Hungarian Plain naturally found itself in the focus of interest. According to Alföldi, Commodus »reverted to the time-honoured, but thoroughly misguided techniques of the Roman frontier policy«<sup>869</sup> after the conclusion of the peace. As a result, the contacts established with the Sarmatians lost their attraction for the Romans, meaning that merchants, who had also acted as diplomats and spies, travelled less frequently to the Sarmatian lands.

The evacuation of Dacia meant that the Hungarian Plain no longer acted as a passage between the two provinces. The Sarmatian Barbaricum was subsequently supplied with products specifically targeted for the region. Another reason for the decline of imports was the destruction of the major centres of *sigillata* production in the Rhine region in the 270s, which had traditionally played a central role in supplying the Sarmatians with luxury wares (**fig. 244**).

<sup>867</sup> See also Alföldi 1942a, 672-673. For a detailed discussion of the campaign, see Alföldi 1966a; 1966b, with the relevant literature.

<sup>868</sup> Vaday 1989b, 207.

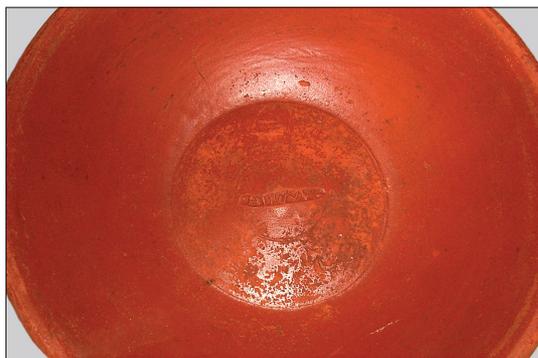
<sup>869</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 202.



**Fig. 242** Most of the pottery shapes lived unchanged or hardly altered for centuries in the Sarmatian culture of the Carpathian Basin. Selection of finds from Üllő, Site 5. – (KM, V. Kulcsár's, A. Nagy's and T. Rácz's excavation, unpublished; photos L. Szászvári).



**Fig. 243** Selection of finds from Üllő, Site 5. – (KM, excavation of V. Kulcsár and team, unpublished; photos L. Szászvári).



**Fig. 244** The major terra sigillata workshops in the Rhine region were destroyed in the 270s. Tiszalök-Rázom, Drag. 31 type terra sigillata bowl from the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. – (Courtesy of the HNM; photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

The export of Roman jewellery and various utilitarian articles to the Hungarian Plain declined. Lányi has aptly noted that the economic boom in Pannonia is not reflected in the region's coin circulation. The coin circulation in the Barbaricum during the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century differs markedly from that of Pannonia. The number of coins in circulation increased in the province, while their value decreased. In contrast, barely any coins reached the Barbaricum<sup>870</sup>. At the same time, the outflow of *aurei* can be noted, principally to the Germanic lands, while no more than a handful are known from the Sarmatian territory<sup>871</sup>. Considering the high ratio of heavily looted Sarmatian burials, it is unclear whether the lack of gold coins reflects a genuine one-off situation or whether the lack is merely illusory. Owing to the plundered graves, little is known about the period's Sarmatian elite or about the prestige items used by the aristocracy.

The few currently known prestige articles, such as Roman and Germanic weapons and luxury items, show a concentration in the north-eastern part of the Hungarian Plain around 300. The relations between the grave inventories (weapons, horse equipment) and burial rite (barrows) of the outstandingly high-ranking warriors (**figs 244-247**) found at Geszteréd, Tiszalök and Herpály would suggest that the elite was descended from the group hallmarked by the Azov-Hévízgyörk-Vizedpuszta assemblages (**fig. 127**) and represents the second and third generation of that group<sup>872</sup>. Insofar as this assumption is correct, we may assume that one of the power centres shifted to the east-north-east.

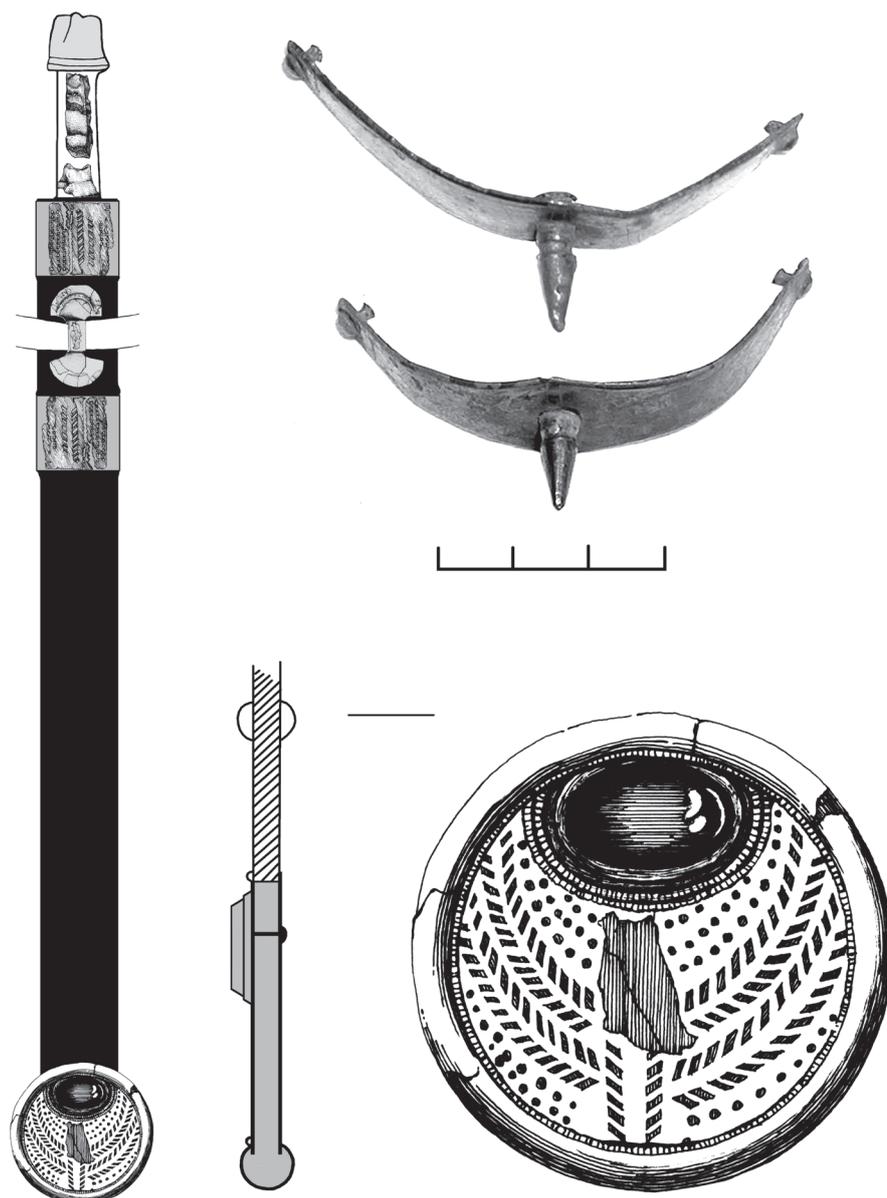
The known prestige articles reflect a wide range of cultural contacts. The Roman pieces are represented by the weapons (sword, shield, spurs and perhaps a spear) from Geszteréd (**fig. 245**) and the Roman candelabrum from Tiszalök (**fig. 246**). The shield boss from Herpály (**fig. 247**), crafted in a Germanic workshop, is best paralleled by a piece from Lilla Harg in Sweden. One intriguing find is the shield boss with an antenna-shaped spike found in Grave II/11 of the barrow cemetery excavated at Hortobágy-Poroshát (**fig. 248**), in

<sup>870</sup> Lányi 1990, 212-213. – Istvánovits 2002, 280.

<sup>871</sup> Alföldi 1943b, 19, noted that the outflow of gold coins was one of the main causes behind the collapse of the western

Roman economy. For the gold coins of the Barbaricum, see Prohászka 2009.

<sup>872</sup> Kulcsár 1998b, 77-78. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003b, 232-237.



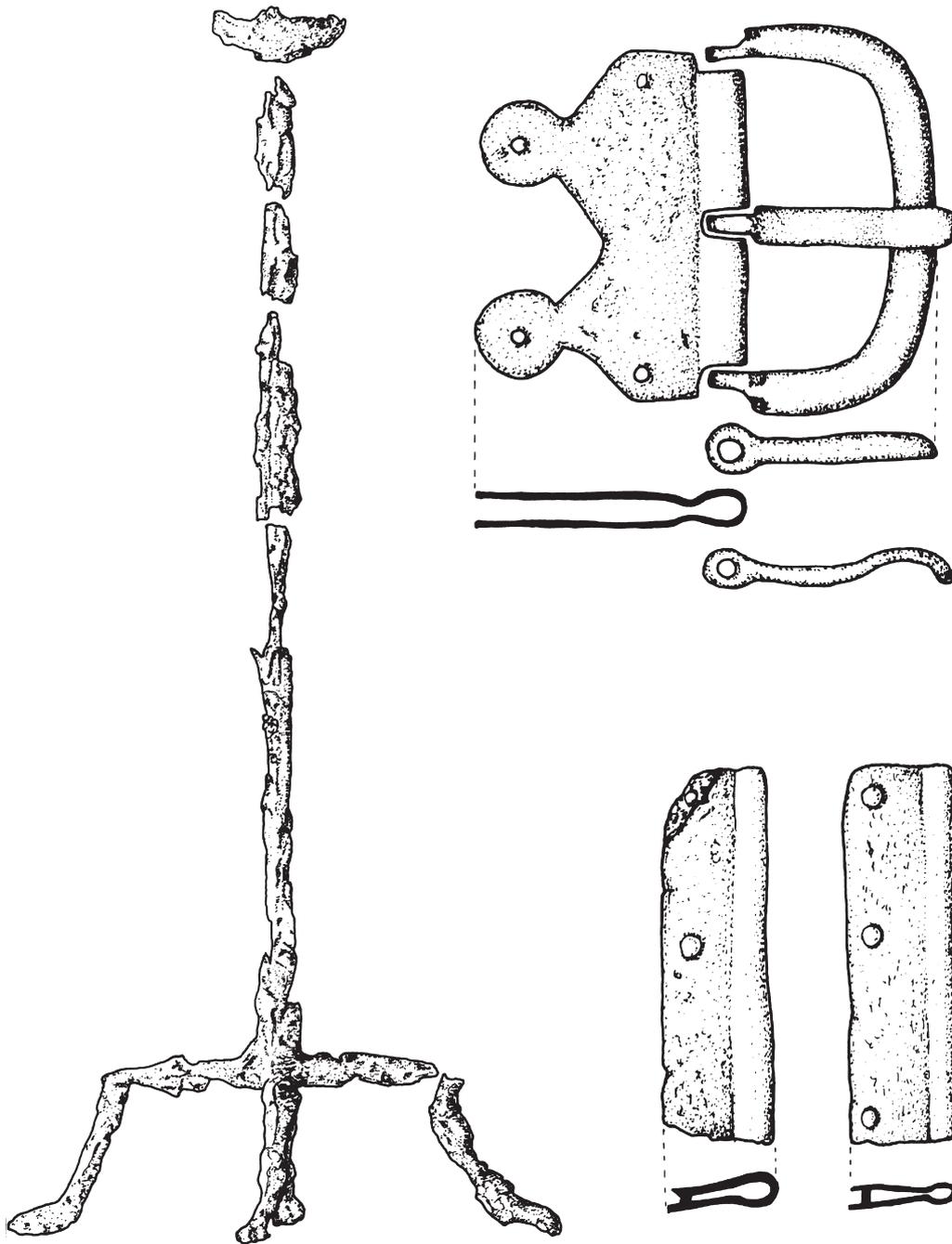
**Fig. 245** The Roman weapons of the high-ranking warrior buried at Geszteréd. – (Reconstruction and photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

the burial of a warrior who appears to have been a distinguished military leader, at least judging from the grave goods and the size of the barrow erected over his grave. Shields are lacking from the period's Sarmatian burials and it is therefore possible that this piece buried with this military leader was a prestige item received from one of the Germanic peoples as part of a military agreement. The extensive contacts are demonstrated by the Scandinavian scabbard chape of the high-ranking warrior buried at Geszteréd (fig. 245) and the Scandinavian buckle of the high-ranking man interred at Tiszalök (fig. 246)<sup>873</sup>.

Viewing these artefacts on a more personal level, they can perhaps best be interpreted as the relics of a warrior camaraderie (fig. 249). It is not mere chance that one recurring motif of the Ossetian Nart epic is the

<sup>873</sup> Geszteréd: von Carnap-Bornheim 2001, with the earlier literature; Tiszalök: Istvánovits/Kulcsár/von Carnap-Bornheim 2006; Herpály and Lilla Harg: Fettich 1930; Hortobágy-Po-

roshát: Zoltai 1941, 274-275 pl. III. For an overview, see Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1994a, 416.



**Fig. 246** Roman iron candelabrum and Scandinavian buckle deposited in the grave of the high-ranking warrior buried at Tiszalök-Rázompusztá. – (After Istvánovits/Kulcsár/von Carnap-Bornheim 2006, figs 3, 1; 6, 1-2).

mutual exchange of gifts among the heroes, whereby the heroes become adopted brothers, meaning that they can rely on the other in any quest, battle or courtship. »Nart man, chose yourself a gift! What is your pleasure? Behold my sword, my horse, my bow!« – even the type of gift is specified<sup>874</sup>. Other gifts took the form of various weapons and herds; regarding the latter, the examination of animal bone assemblages to identify possible non-local species could prove to be a fruitful line of inquiry in future studies.

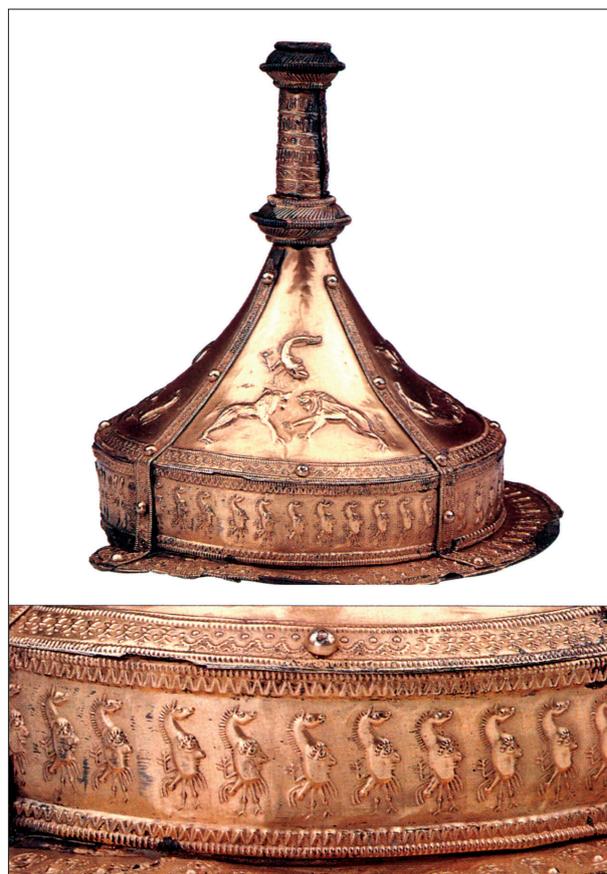
<sup>874</sup> Nart 1981, 95.

Research into contact between the Sarmatians and the Germanic peoples is still in its infancy. One intriguing question is why the cremation burials of the Przeworsk culture containing weapons attesting to a Vandal presence that had appeared at the time of the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars in the Upper Tisza region disappeared around the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century (fig. 202)<sup>875</sup>.

Several new settlements were established on the Hungarian Plain in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century<sup>876</sup>, reflecting a population growth. These include the largest recently investigated settlements at Üllő Sites 5 and 9, covering 40 hectares, where over 9,000 features were uncovered, and the Ecsér Site 7, where some 7,000 features were excavated over an 8.7 hectare area (fig. 250). The dating of the settlements to before the 270s is principally based on *sigillata* imports from the Rhine region. Although, as we repeatedly emphasise, the period's chronology is far from satisfactory, it would appear that gritty wares appeared in the ceramic inventory of the settlements from the close of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (fig. 251)<sup>877</sup>. Several new cemeteries were opened, again an indication of population growth<sup>878</sup>. The above data support the picture broadly outlined in the above that a new wave of Roxolanian groups settled on the Hungarian Plain within one or two decades after the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century.

The changes are more striking in the archaeological material of the Upper Tisza region than that of the central Sarmatian territory in the period following the evacuation of Dacia. As mentioned, Germanic cremation burials disappear. The preceding settlement pottery characterised by hand-built wares of partly Przeworsk and partly Dacian types are succeeded by the so-called Bereg culture. The two main sites of the culture at Beregsurány and Csengersima have yielded an immense amount of wheel-turned, strongly profiled, grey vessels bearing stamped decoration (figs 252-254). It would appear that these wares were produced by Roman potters from Porolissum, who had fled the Gothic advance and continued their trade in the barbarian lands<sup>879</sup>.

Mention must be made of the theory that the arrival and settlement of the Gepids was the reason for the changes in the Upper Tisza region after the evacuation of Dacia. This assumption is still debated. In his critical



**Fig. 247** The Germanic bronze shield boss covered with gilded silver plate found at Herpály was probably a prestige gift received by a Sarmatian noble. – (After Kocsis 2002, figs 5-6).

<sup>875</sup> This is generally explained by the appearance of the Gepids; an issue discussed at greater length below.

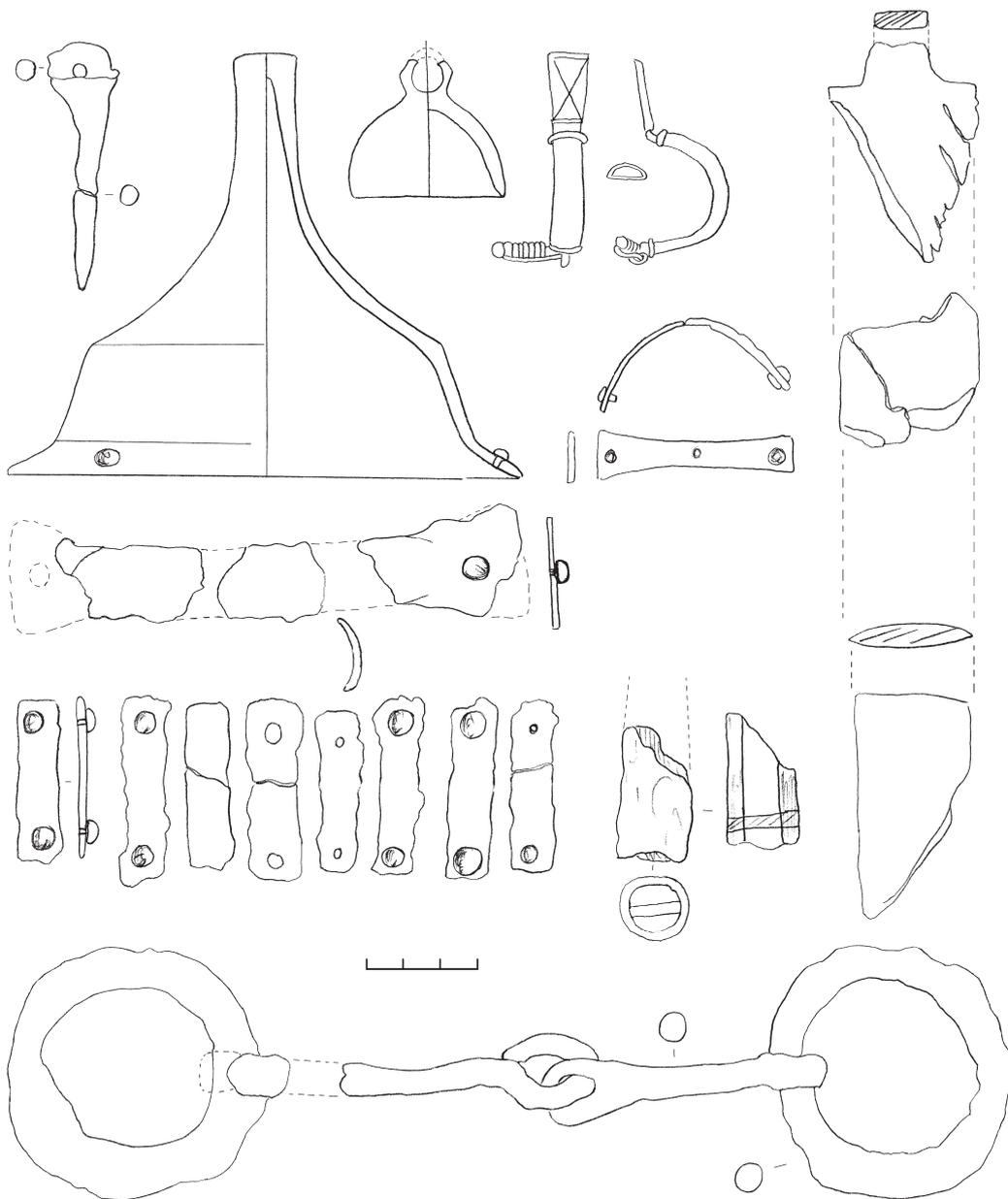
<sup>876</sup> e.g. RKM 2006, 21-25. 42-49. The dating of settlement sites remains a serious problem in most cases and thus the assumed demographic boom of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century based on the find material is hypothetical at best.

<sup>877</sup> The Roman variant of this ware made on a fast wheel and the barbarian variety, the latter often indistinguishable from the former, are both known. Recent archaeometric studies indicate

that the latter were made with the coil technique and finished on a turning wheel meaning that they were not manufactured on a fast wheel (Kulcsár/Mérai 2011, 66-67).

<sup>878</sup> Kulcsár 1998a, Catalogue.

<sup>879</sup> Istvánovits 1997; 2004. Several dates have been proposed for the appearance of the Bereg culture, the most generally accepted being that the culture had become widespread by the period after the Marcomannic Wars (Lamiová-Schmiedlová 1997, 751; Matei 1997, 375).



**Fig. 248** The Germanic shield from Grave II. 11 of the Hortobágy-Poroshát II cemetery indicates that the man buried in the grave had been the community's high-ranking military leader who had received the shield as a prestige gift. Selection from the find assemblage. – (Déri Museum, Debrecen; drawings E. Istvánovits).

review of earlier studies in this field, Bierbrauer rejected this theory. The find assemblages brought to light during more recent excavations in the Upper Tisza region do not support it, either<sup>880</sup>.

Various new types of jewellery and utilitarian artefacts soon became popular and widespread, although it is impossible to draw sharp chronological boundaries. Earlier pieces were gradually replaced by new ones, such as brooches with an inverted or side-turned foot (*Fibel mit umgeschlagenem Fuß*, *Fibel mit geschlossenen Nadelhalter / mit seitwärts geschlagenem Fuß*), plate-brooches (*Scheibenfibeln*) with glass or stone inlay, polyhedral beads and new vessel types (figs 255-256)<sup>881</sup>. A frank assessment of the chronological scheme currently in use calls for the admittance that the archaeological assemblages of the period before

<sup>880</sup> Bóna et al. 1993, 52-53. – Bierbrauer 2006.

<sup>881</sup> Párducz 1944, 76. – Vaday 1989b, 89-94. 144.



**Fig. 249** Depiction of the Scythian ritual of blood-brotherhood on a plaque from Kul-Oba. A similar ritual described in the Nart Epic involved the exchange of gifts such as weapons and horses. This traditional ritual was probably widespread among the steppe peoples. – (After *Skythische Kunst* 1986, no. 196).



**Fig. 250** Aerial photo of Ecsér, Site 7 (Motorway M0) (V. Kulcsár's and team's excavation, unpublished). – (Photo Zs. Miklós).



**Fig. 251** Gritty ware, the typical products of the potters' settlement at Úllő. – (KM, V. Kulcsár's and team's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári).



**Fig. 252** Several pottery kilns were found at the main sites of the Bereg culture. Csengersima, Feature 704. – (After Istvánovits/Kulcsár/Mérai 2011, fig. 2).



**Fig. 253** The vessel stamps found on the large potters' settlement at Beregsurány were perhaps used by Roman potters fleeing the Gothic advance after the evacuation of Dacia. – (JAM; photo G. Boros).

and after the evacuation of Dacia can be defined as the culture of a transitional period compared to the well datable assemblages of the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries and the relatively well-definable finds appearing from the later 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the absence of serialisations, various artefact types – and especially pottery wares – are dated subjectively at best and are in obvious need of further research.

### FROM THE TETRARCHY TO THE HUN PERIOD

The abandonment of Dacia created an entirely new situation for the Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin. The Visigoths (Tervingi) occupying Transylvania became their new eastern neighbours. At the same time, the



**Fig. 254** Typical stamped pottery of the Bereg culture. – (JAM; photo G. Boros).

majority of their steppe brethren submitted to the Ostrogoths (Greuthingi). The Dniester marked the boundary between the two kindred Gothic peoples. The eastern border of the Sarmatian territory on the Hungarian Plain came under increased pressure. It is hardly surprising, then, that even though the relationship between Sarmatians and Romans also underwent a major change, it continued to shape decisively the region's history:



**Fig. 255** Brooches with inverted and side-turned foot from Üllő, Site 5. – (KM, excavation of V. Kulcsár and team, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári).

Seven major imperial expeditions were sent against the Sarmatians during the Tetrarchy [...] but even these major campaigns failed to completely break them. It remains a fact that no other adversary called for such immense military exertions. It is also quite evident that recent research on the Sarmatians has failed to acknowledge the strength of the lazygians<sup>882</sup>.

<sup>882</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 675.



**Fig. 256** Plate brooches with glass or stone inlay: **1** Üllő, Site 5, Feature 5983 (KM, V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári). – **2** Szihalom-Budaszög (after Fodor 1997, 121 no. 122). – **3** Óföldsé-Ürmös, Site 1, Feature 158 (after Sóskuti 2009, fig. 37).

The Romans apparently regarded the Sarmatians as worthy adversaries during their clashes with them, at least if the accounts are to be believed that Sarmatians, as able warriors, were admitted into the praetorian guard of Galerius and Maximinus Daia<sup>883</sup>. It is hardly surprising that Galerius sent the young Constantine to fight against the Sarmatians in order to win his spurs<sup>884</sup>.

The Sarmatians thus remained a force to be reckoned with despite the increasingly visible presence of the Germanic peoples, who from Constantine's reign onward, on the eve of the Great Migrations, were gradually cast into the role of the Empire's principal enemy in Roman eyes. In addition to the clashes with the Romans and their new foes, the Germanic peoples, the Sarmatians' weakening and decline was also caused by a civil war that broke out in 322, after the Gothic attack, and which finally ended a generation later, in 358/359.

### The Tetrarchy

Relations between the Romans and the Sarmatians during the Tetrarchy<sup>885</sup> are rather controversial. On the one hand, the literary sources mentioned successive Sarmatian incursions, while on the other, the construction of the Csörsz Dyke (also known as the Devil's Dyke) – one of the most intriguing and impressive archaeological monuments of the Hungarian Plain – is dated to this period by many scholars, who rarely fail to note that this defencework was erected with Roman aid and on Roman orders. The most frequent explanation given for this apparent contradiction is that the recurring Sarmatian upheavals were not genuine campaigns conducted for booty, but desperate manoeuvres to secure their admission into the Empire because they came under increasing pressure from their new eastern neighbours<sup>886</sup>. This goal was sometimes achieved, while in other cases, the Sarmatians received military aid from the Romans. In this scenario, the construction

<sup>883</sup> Lactant. *de Mort* XXXVIII: »For hardly was there any person in the lifeguard [of Maximinus Daia] except of those people, who, having been driven from their habitations by the Goths in the twentieth year of Diocletian, yielded themselves to Galerius and entered into his service.« – Kiss 2008, 4. – de Ste. Croix 1981, 513: the people evicted from their homeland by the Goths can most likely be identified with the Sarmatians.

<sup>884</sup> *Excerpta Valesiana* II.3: »For when Constantine, then a young man, was serving in the cavalry against the Sarmatians, he seized by the hair and carried off a fierce savage, and threw him at the feet of the emperor Galerius. Then sent by Galerius through a swamp, he entered it on his horse and made a way for the rest to the Sarmatians, of whom he slew many and won the victory for Galerius.«

<sup>885</sup> In 285, Diocletian conferred the purple on a fellow-emperor to rule with him and two caesars were appointed in 293. The Empire was divided in four and ruled through a re-organised administration. The creation of the Tetrarchy also involved military reforms. However, the new system proved to be rather unstable. The Empire became an arena of civil war from 306 onward, and the Tetrarchy eventually fell apart in 313. The ensuing dual emperor system with Licinius and Constantine as co-emperors was similarly short-lived. The two emperors matched their forces and – as will be discussed at greater length below – the clash between them ended with Constantine's victory in 324, after which he became sole ruler of the Empire.

<sup>886</sup> Ammianus' (XVII.13.3) remark that the Limigantes (see later) »were prepared to refuse if they were ordered to emigrate« is noteworthy.

of the ramparts was part of the military alliance. The barbarisation of the Roman army certainly confirms the increasing mass admission (*receptio*) of various peoples. In addition to the testimony of the written sources, certain elements in the archaeological record also confirm this. The nearly 300-year-long intermittent animosity between Romans and Sarmatians faded when the need arose to act against their new mutual enemy, the Goths. These issues will be discussed at greater length below.

First, let us consider the finer details of the relationship between the Romans and the Sarmatians. As mentioned previously, seven major Roman campaigns were launched against the Sarmatians<sup>887</sup>. The Romans scored major victories in the winter of 289/290, 292, 294, 299 and on a further three occasions between 299 and 305/308. One indication of the tension is that between 289 and 294, Diocletian spent the better part of his time in Sirmium, the town that later became one of the Tetrarchy's four imperial seats. It would appear that the emperor personally led the war against the Sarmatians in 294. Following the victory indicated by the designs on coins issued at the time (fig. 257, 2)<sup>888</sup>, Galerius marched to the Lower Danube, where he clashed with the Carpi and the Bastarnae<sup>889</sup>. The opening of the new front after 294 indicates that the situation in the Middle Danube Valley had been normalised to some extent<sup>890</sup>, a conjecture also supported by the fact that some troops were transferred to the army fighting in the Persian campaign of 297<sup>891</sup>.

The peace did not last for long. The barbarians became restless again in 299. All four emperors again received the epithet *Sarmaticus*<sup>892</sup>. Coins inscribed with VICTORIA SARMAT on their reverse were minted again in 300-301 (fig. 257, 1), reflecting the temporary settlement of the conflict erupting around 299<sup>893</sup>. Galerius also had his share of trouble from the Sarmatians. We may assume three campaigns around this time, one of which was definitely conducted in 305, while the date of the other two, usually given as 302-303 and 308, is uncertain. Alföldi has aptly noted:

If the emperors deemed it necessary to retaliate against the enemy seven times during these twenty years, we can imagine how much more often the Sarmatians burst into Pannonia, and how many smaller marauding raids burdened their conscience beside the large-scale campaigns, to incur this backlash<sup>894</sup>.



**Fig. 257** 1 coin issued by Maximian commemorating the victory over the Sarmatians in 294 (RIC VI 33b). – 2 Diocletian's coin with the legend VICTORIA SARMAT minted in 300-301 (RIC VI 119a).

<sup>887</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 675.

<sup>888</sup> e.g. RIC VI, 5a. VI, 119a.

<sup>889</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 675. – Nagy 1954, 513. »Subsequently, they conducted several wars both in conjunction and separately, subduing the Carpi and Bastarnae, and defeating the Sarmatians, from which nations he settled a great number of captives in the Roman territories« (Eutrop. IX.25.1-2). This passage is generally taken to refer to the resettlement of the Carpi. See Alföldi 1942a, 674. – Tóth 2005b, 370, with further literature.

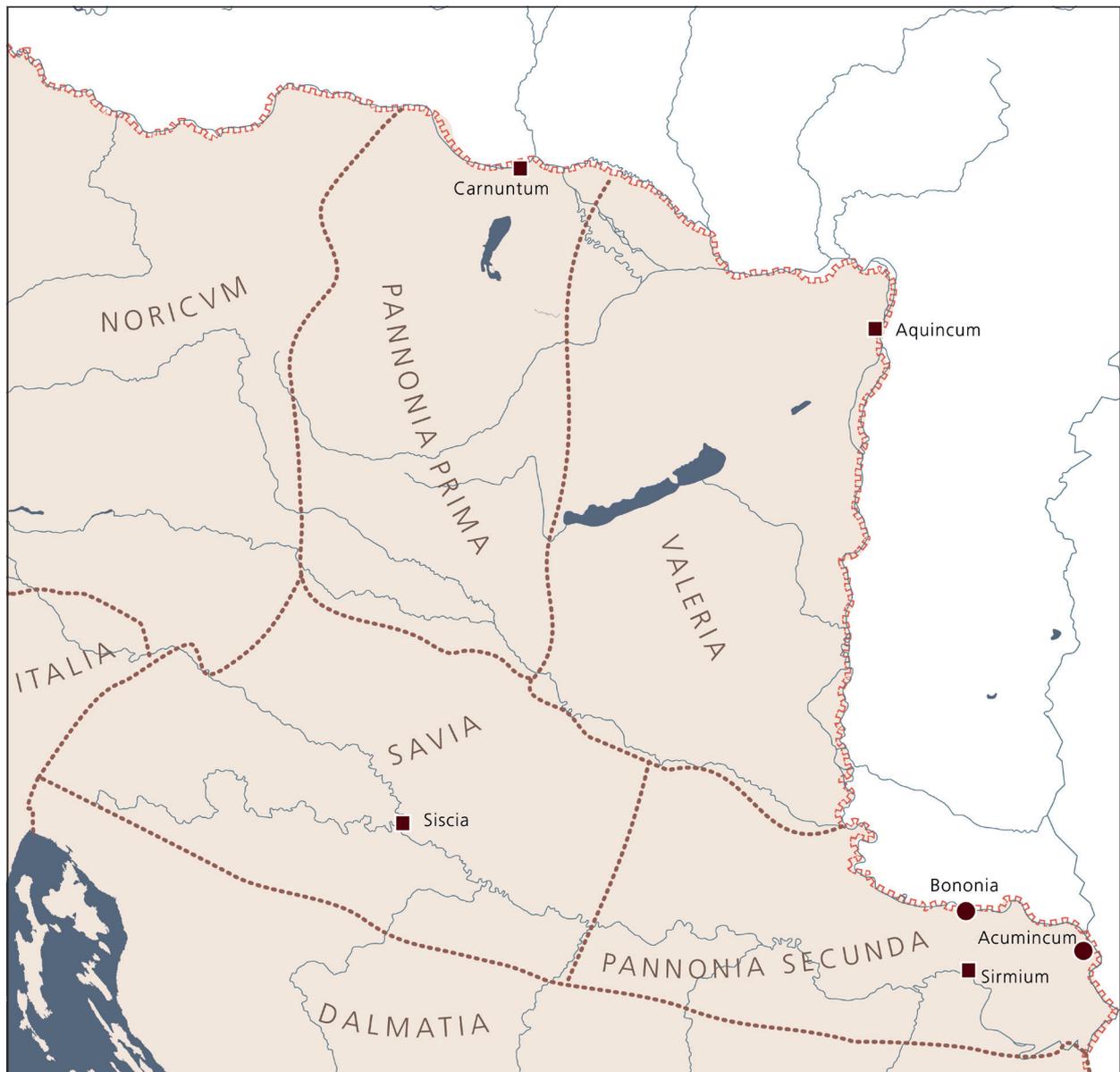
<sup>890</sup> Mócsy 1972, 86, claimed that »Aus dem Jahrzehnt nach 294 berichten unsere Quellen über keinen anderen Krieg«, with the exception of »unbedeutender Grenzzwischenfall« in 299 and 305.

<sup>891</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 675.

<sup>892</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 675 n. 40.

<sup>893</sup> RIC VI, 119a.

<sup>894</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 675 n. 43.

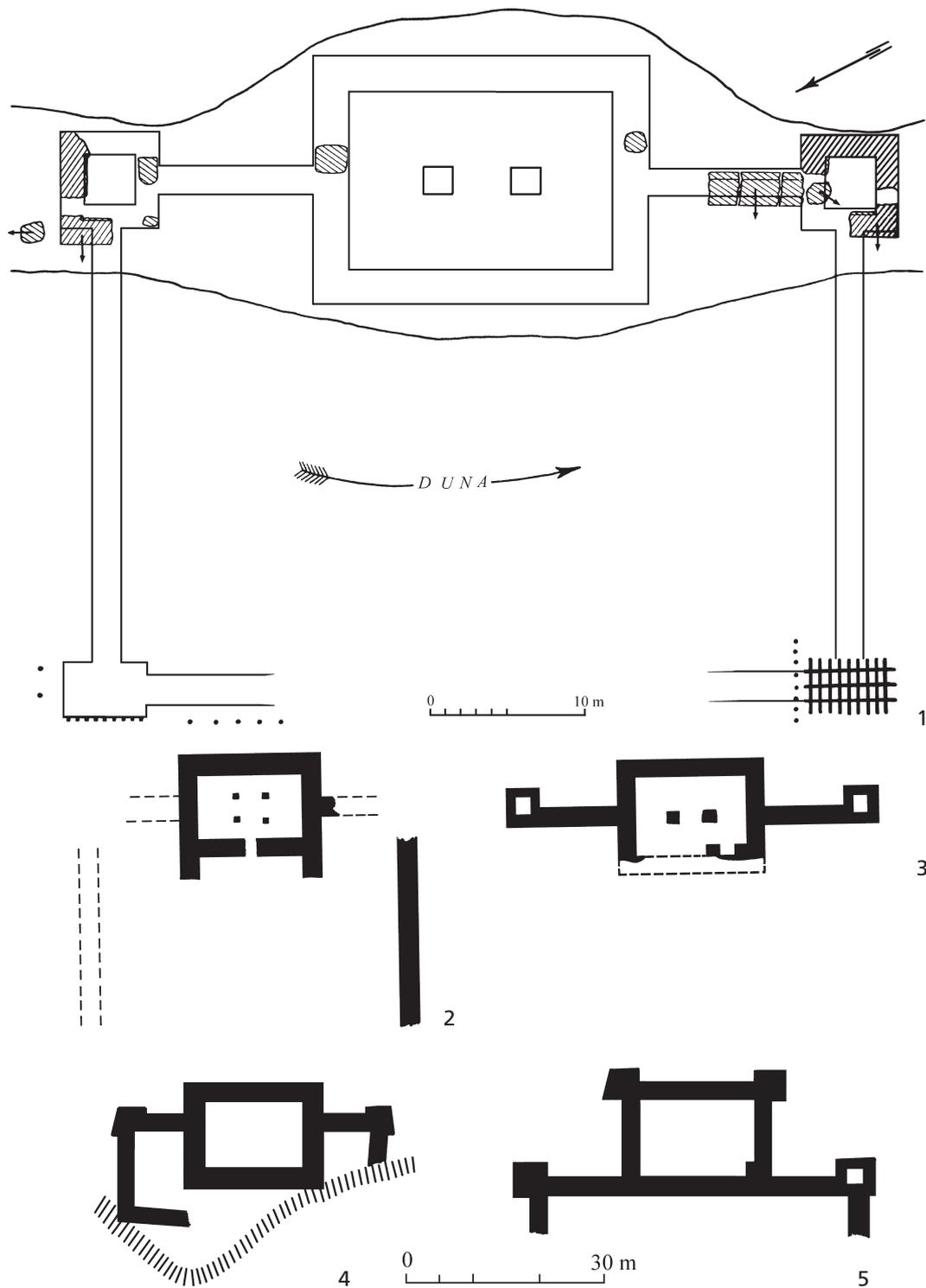


**Fig. 258** The division of Pannonia into four provinces. – (Map M. Ober, RGZM).

Succeeding the reign of the soldier-emperors, the Tetrarchy called for the creation of a new administrative system and the re-organisation of the army. These changes naturally affected the Middle Danube region, the area most vulnerable to the frequent and severe attacks of the barbarians. The number of provinces was raised to one hundred; the provinces were ordered into four prefectures, each with twelve dioceses. The two Pannonian provinces were re-organised into four smaller ones at the very end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century as part of the administrative reform: Pannonia Prima; Pannonia Secunda; Pannonia Valeria; and Pannonia Savia (fig. 258). This also meant changes in the defence system. The earlier two legions each remained stationed in Valeria and Pannonia Prima, and two more legions were sent to Pannonia Secunda<sup>895</sup>. Accepting Alföldi's views, Mócsy assumed the start of an intensive construction of forts during the relatively peaceful period after 294 as part of the new defence policy<sup>896</sup>. He believed that the greater part of the chain of counter-

<sup>895</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 674. – Mócsy 1974, 273.

<sup>896</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 673-674. – Mócsy 1972, 84-85. – Kovács 2001.



**Fig. 259** Groundplan of the so-called Nógrádverőce type counter-forts: **1** Contra Florentiam/Dunafalva. – **2** Engers. – **3** Nógrádverőce. – **4** Neckarau. – **5** Horányi csárda. – (After Mócsy 1958, figs 12-13).

forts on the left bank of the Danube (figs 259-260) and the Csörsz Dyke had been built at this time, in line with Diocletian's defensive strategy. It later became clear that Mócsy's assertions concerning the forts were mistaken in the light of more recent archaeological evidence. Lőrincz's study of the stamped bricks from the bridgeheads on the left bank have proven conclusively that the earliest forts were erected after the

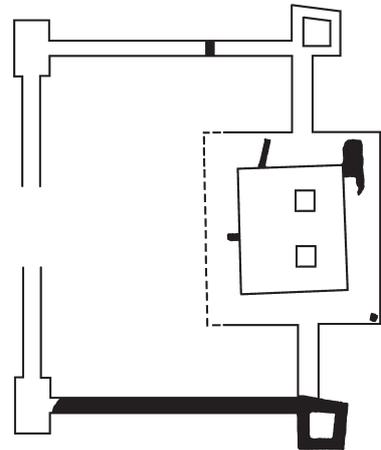
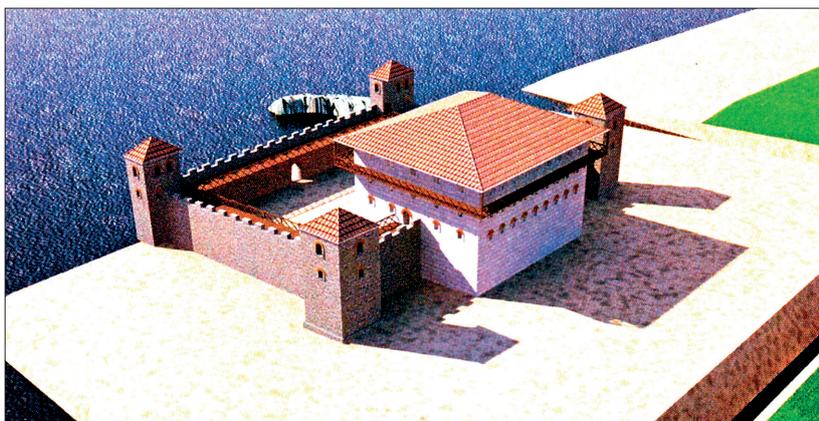
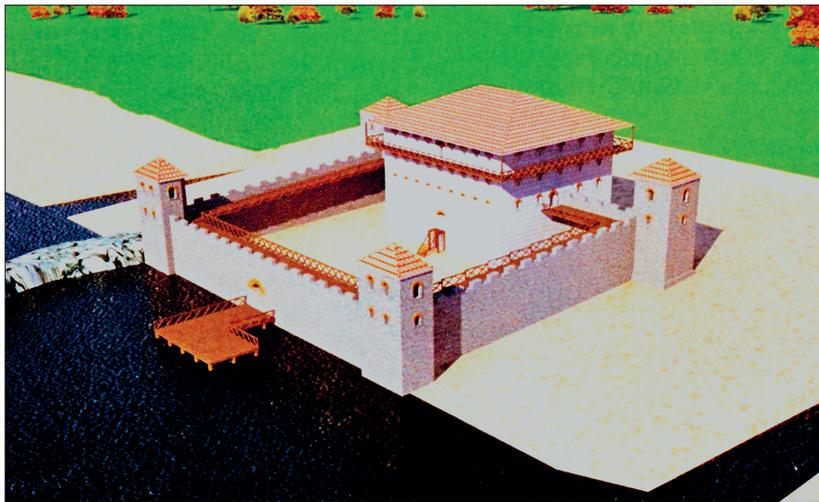


Fig. 260 Reconstruction of the Roman counter-fort at Dunakeszi. – (After Mráv 2011, figs 38-39).

mid-350s, during Constantius II's reign, and that the overwhelming majority were built in the 370s, under Valentinian<sup>897</sup>. The problem of the Csörsz Dyke will be addressed at greater length below.

Nonetheless, the depictions and legends on coin reverses<sup>898</sup> and a brief report indicate that the transformation of the defence system was continued to some extent. The report in question mentioned that in 294 forts were built opposite Acumincum or Aquincum and Bononia on Sarmatian territory (*in barbarico*) (fig. 258)<sup>899</sup>. The clarification of the relations between the Romans and the neighbouring barbarian lands remains a task for future research. It is virtually impossible to gauge to what extent the Empire's neighbours wanted to or

<sup>897</sup> Lőrincz 1999. The latter includes, e.g. the counter-fort at Dunakeszi, which has now been systematically explored (fig. 260) (Mráv 2002).

<sup>898</sup> Gudea 2002, 120.

<sup>899</sup> According to the reference for 294 in the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, »his coss. castra facta in Sarmatia contra Acinco et Bononia« (MGH AA Chronica minora I. 230). For a discussion, see Soproni 1978, 128-130. – Tóth 1982. – Mráv 1992/1995, 13-15. – Bertók 1997, 167, and, more recently, Kovács 2001. – Soproni 2003, 67-68, with the earlier literature. Soproni believed that the two *castra* lay immediately by the frontier on the left Danube bank and identified *contra Bononia* with the Roman building at Begeč; in contrast, Kovács elaborated on

Mócsy's conjecture that construction work had not been undertaken in the barbarian lands immediately opposite Bononia (Banoštor), but in the more interior areas of the Sarmatian territory. The location of »Acinco« has proven to be more difficult, with an ongoing debate as to whether the settlement in question should be identified with Acumincum or Aquincum. The two forts in the Barbaricum are listed in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century section of the *Notitia Dignitatum*: Bononia as part of the military organisation of Pannonia; Acimincum as part of Valeria's (*Auxilia Augustensia, contra Bononiam in barbarico in castello Onagrino*, Not.Dign. Occ. XXXII. 41; *Auxilia vigilum, contra Acinco in barbarico*, Not.Dign. Occ. XXXIII. 48).

were able to preserve their sovereignty<sup>900</sup>, and to what extent the Romans were able to meddle in the affairs of the barbarians.

### The Age of the Constantine Dynasty

In 305, the two *augusti*, Diocletian and Maximian, abdicated. The years after the death of Maximian's successor, Chlorus (d. 306), were marked by the emperors' struggles against each other. Although the internal strife brought two decades of instability, Rome's security from enemy attacks was ensured by the peace along the Persian front during the reign of Narseh and Hormizd II (302-309), and after the ascension of Shapur II, who had been crowned while still a child<sup>901</sup>. The main episode in the struggle between the contenders for the Roman Empire was the conflict between Constantine and Licinius, the former ruling the western and the latter the eastern provinces after 313. We do not hear of any Sarmatian incursions during the early years of the civil war, although it is far from obvious whether the silence of our sources is an indication that the barbarians kept their distance from the *limes*, or that contemporary chroniclers were more concerned by domestic events and took little notice of the barbarian raids to which they had become accustomed. In hindsight, the latter seems more likely, given the subsequent events (we shall return to the final showdown between the two emperors later).

In his campaigns against Maximinus Daia in 313 and, later, against Constantine, Licinius withdrew significant force from the army units stationed in the Balkans and the Lower Danube<sup>902</sup>. The region's barbarians, among them the Goths, the Carpi and, most likely, the Sarmatians, made every effort to exploit the weakness of the frontier garrisons<sup>903</sup>. In 314, both Constantine and Licinius were awarded the title *Sarmaticus*, reflecting one or more major clashes. Although the details of these clashes remain unknown, the very fact that the title was taken indicates Roman military victories<sup>904</sup>. Based on the text of a papyrus, Barnes suggested renewed incursions by the barbarians in 318<sup>905</sup>.

The Sarmatians are next heard of in the early 320s, when Optatianus Porphyrius recorded the Sarmatian siege of Campona (Nagy­tétény)<sup>906</sup>. The siege and the emperor's assumed whereabouts suggest that the attack against Valeria was launched during the summer of 322<sup>907</sup>. Constantine drove back the attackers and pursued them. Starting from Campona, the emperor marched to the Danube-Tisza interfluvium and chased the enemy into the south-western Banat after crossing the Tisza. He entered Roman territory at Margum in Moesia, whence he proceeded to Bononia (Banoštor), where the booty was divided (fig. 261). Coins dating from 323-324 with the inscription *SARMATIA DEVICTA* on their reverse mark the announcement of Constantine's victory (fig. 262)<sup>908</sup>. Alföldi suggested that a passage in Zosimus' *History* reflected these events:

Constantine hearing that the Sauromatae, who dwelt near the Palus Maeotis, had passed the Ister in boats, and pillaged his territories, led his army against them, and was met by the barbar-

<sup>900</sup> Kiss 2008, 6-7.

<sup>901</sup> Blockley 1998, 418-419.

<sup>902</sup> *Excerpta Valesiana* V.21 mentioned »neglected frontiers« by the Lower Danube.

<sup>903</sup> Patsch 1928, 13. – Alföldi 1942a, 676.

<sup>904</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 676.

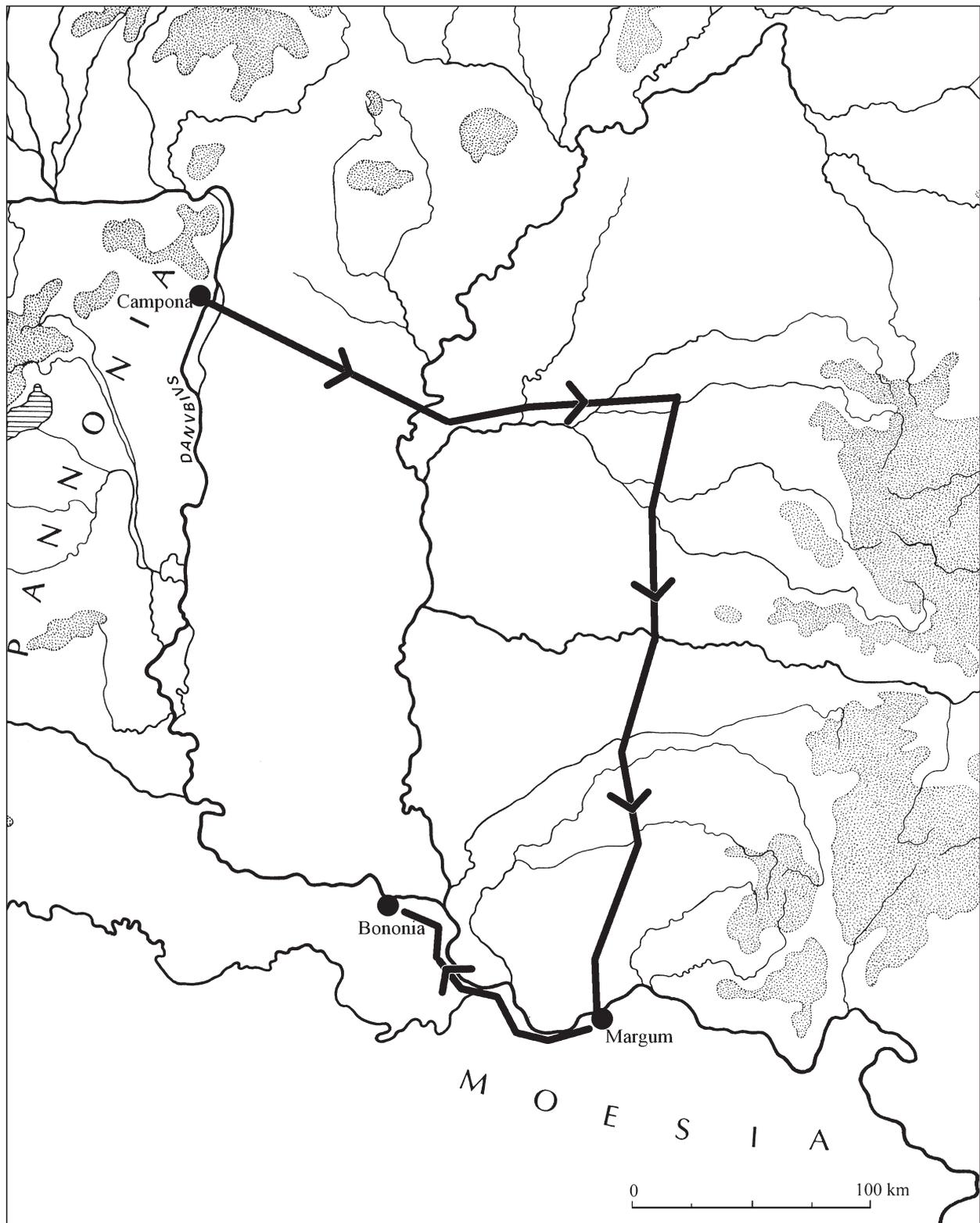
<sup>905</sup> Barnes 1982, 82. 234-236.

<sup>906</sup> Opt. Porfyr. *Carm.* 6.14-17. »Showing skill to be conquered [i. e. requiring skill to be conquered], rocky (Campona?) offers, Greatest/Highest One [i. e. Constantine] Sarmatian slaughters, and all the vows (I pray that you are fortunate), concealed un-

der a certain perspective, have been accomplished. Already so many times, Augustus, the prophet knowing the facts must speak of matters so great. Campona, steeped in enemy blood after the battle, most confined with bodies scattered on all its soil, as victor she marvels at the crowds (of corpses) submerged in a river filled to overflowing and the fierce battle. « We are greatly indebted to E. L. Wheeler for an English translation of this poem.

<sup>907</sup> Constantine was still in Sirmium on June 12, but had arrived in Bononia by July 6 (Patsch 1928, 17).

<sup>908</sup> Patsch 1928, 16-17. – RIC VII. 48, 222, 289, 429, 435.



**Fig. 261** Probable route of Constantine's campaign into the Barbaricum in 322. – (Reconstruction E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

ians, under their king Rausimodus. The Sauromatae attacked a town which was sufficiently garrisoned, but its wall was built in the lower part of stone, and in the upper part of wood. They therefore thought that they might easily take the town by burning all the wooden part of the wall; and with that view set it on fire, and in the mean time shot at those who stood on the walls. The defenders threw down darts and stones upon the barbarians, and killed many of them; and Constantine then coming up and falling on them from a higher ground, slew a great number, took more alive, and put the rest to flight. Rausimodus, having lost the greater part of his army, took shipping and crossed the Ister, with an intention of once more plundering the Roman dominions. Constantine, hearing of his design, followed them over the Ister, and attacked them in a thick wood upon a hill, to which they had fled, where he killed many of them, amongst whom was Rausimodus. He also took many of them prisoners, giving quarter to those that would submit; and returned to his head-quarters with an immense number of captives. These he distributed into the different cities, and then came to Thessalonica [...] <sup>909</sup>.



**Fig. 262** Coin bearing the legend SARMATIA DEVICTA minted by Constantine in 324-325 (RIC VII 48).

Zosimus' quoted passage paints a rather confusing picture and several interpretations have been proposed. Several scholars, principally Patsch <sup>910</sup>, believe that independently of events at Campona, the Goths crossed the frozen Danube early the next year (in 323) and ravaged Moesia Inferior and Thrace. Zosimus' Sauromatae would thus refer to the marauding Goths. Beside the topographical data, this interpretation is supported by Rausimodus' Germanic name.

The possibility that the Goths were designated as Sauromatae cannot be rejected out of hand because 4<sup>th</sup> century settlements of the Černjahov culture, associated with the Goths, have been uncovered in the Don Delta <sup>911</sup>. The settlement of the Goths in the region is thus confirmed by the archaeological record (fig. 136). Irrespective of whether the assault was launched by Goths or Sarmatians, the campaign, obviously, did not start from the Sea of Azov. Only this much is certain, that the marauders had earlier or at the time »dwelt near the Palus Maeotis«. The other uncertainty is posed by the location of the »hill« to which Rausimodus and his army retreated. Assuming that these events took place in the Lower Danube region, the »thick wood« and the »hill« probably lay somewhere in Oltenia or Muntenia.

Alföldi rejected the arguments that Rausimodus had been a Goth because of his Germanic name, claiming that Zosimus' report actually described the attack against Campona and the subsequent events <sup>912</sup>. Hungarian scholars tend to agree with Alföldi, contending that Zosimus jumbled the events of 322 in Pannonia

<sup>909</sup> Zosimus II.21.

<sup>910</sup> Patsch 1928, 16-17. – Alföldi 1942a, 676 n. 48.

<sup>911</sup> For the Černjahov culture, see section »Marosszentanna /Sântana de Mureş-Černjahov culture« and Bezuglov 2003.

<sup>912</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 676. In Alföldi's view, Paulovics's excavations at Nagytétény support the above interpretation because the camp's walls were erected from stone, while the superstructure was constructed from timber. More recent excavations at the site have not furnished contradictory evidence as far as the camp's architecture is concerned, see Kocsis/Koós 2003, 157-158. Regarding Rausimodus' Germanic name, we should here recall one of Jordanes' passages: »Let no one say that this

name is quite foreign to the Gothic tongue, and let no one who is ignorant cavil at the fact that the tribes of men make use of many names, even as the Romans borrow from the Macedonians, the Greeks from the Romans, the Sarmatians from the Germans, and the Goths frequently from the Huns« (Jordan IX.58). That this was indeed the case and that names in themselves are uncertain sources for ethnic attribution is illustrated by excellent examples from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries quoted by Maenchen-Helfen (1973, 383). It seems most unlikely that this practice was wholly unprecedented and that a Sarmatian could not have been named Marcus, Alarich or Rausimodus for that matter.

and the Gothic incursion into Moesia in 323<sup>913</sup>. In our opinion, the question of whether Zosimus' passage referred to the Goths or the Sarmatians remains open, as does the Sarmatians' role in the conflict between Licinius and Constantine, between whom the final showdown was played out on 3 July 324 at Adrianople. Licinius was supported by the Goths led by Alica<sup>914</sup>; it is unclear whether the Sarmatians also rallied to his side against Constantine<sup>915</sup>. It is possible that the *casus belli* between the two emperors was Constantine's already mentioned campaign on the Hungarian Plain and the relentless chase he gave the barbarians, during which he crossed the Danube and entered Licinius' territory. This was an unprecedented move, a gross interference in the affairs of his fellow-emperor<sup>916</sup>.

Constantine defeated Licinius at the battle of Adrianople, bringing an end to the civil war. The ensuing years marked the onset of a more peaceful period in the Middle Danube Basin. The Sarmatians did not launch any campaigns during the years that followed<sup>917</sup>. However, it is by no means clear whether the decade-long respite was the outcome of their immense losses or a new treaty of alliance.

After defeating Licinius, Constantine undertook a major construction project along the Danubian *limes*. Two new Danubian bridges were built at Oescus (Gigen, Bulgaria) and Transmaurisca (Tutrakan, Bulgaria)<sup>918</sup> as part of the Daphne Plan, as the emperor's ambitious project has been dubbed by research, alongside the construction of a series of forts in strategically vital locations. One of these was the fort of Constantiana Daphne on the left of the Danube in the Lower Danube region, still unlocated to date, after which the »project« has been named. It has been suggested that the Csörsz Dyke and the Brazda lui Novac Dyke in advance of the *limes* were constructed as part of the same project<sup>919</sup>.

### The Sarmatian Civil War and Subsequent Events

The peace lasted less than a decade (324-332). There is an unusual wealth of information on the conflicts erupting from the year 332 and the events of the ensuing war<sup>920</sup>. The events are narrated with the following words:

In the [...] twenty-sixth year of Constantine's rule, the Goths attacked the land of Sarmatians and overwhelmed the Romans with very large forces, in their impetuous strength destroying everything with their slaughter and plundering. Constantine himself prepared an army against them, and defeating them with difficulty in a great battle, drove them beyond the Danube<sup>921</sup>.

<sup>913</sup> Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 47 n. 10.

<sup>914</sup> *Excerpta Valesiana* V.27.

<sup>915</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 677, quoting Hieron. *Chron.* a. 2337. However, we did not find any references to the Sarmatians in the quoted passage.

<sup>916</sup> See *Excerpta Valesiana* V.21. – M. Kiss 1999, 86-87. The border between the eastern and western halves of the Empire and, in particular, the administrative affiliation of Illyricum has given rise to virtually endless debates. The creation of a uniform defence for the Pannonian and Thracian Danube section would doubtless have been more sensible from a strategic point of view, but political considerations such as the balance between the eastern and western half of the Empire, their roughly equal size and power, thwarted any practical considerations and turned Illyricum into a bone of contention (Kiss 2004, 16-17).

<sup>917</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 676-677.

<sup>918</sup> Aurelius Victor 41.13. »He was, to be sure, too desirous of praise, as is able to be ascertained. On account of the legends inscribed on many structures, he was accustomed to call Trajan »Wall Plant.« He built a bridge over the Danube.« For a discussion of the two bridges see Patsch 1928, 20-21. For the archaeological investigation of the bridge erected at Oescus in 328, see Gherghe/Amon 2007, with further literature.

<sup>919</sup> Gabler/Lőrincz 1990, 100-101. – Soproni 1978, 116.

<sup>920</sup> The importance of the civil war among the Sarmatians is indicated by the very fact that the Roman sources reported extensively on its events. For a discussion, see Patsch 1928, 28-32. – Alföldi 1942a, 679-683. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 47-48.

<sup>921</sup> Is.Hisp. 5.

Another report mentioned that:

Then he [Constantine] began war against the Goths, rendering aid also to the Sarmatians, who had appealed to him for help. The result was that almost a hundred thousand of the Goths were destroyed by hunger and cold through Constantinus Caesar. Then he also received hostages, among whom was Ariaricus, the king's son. When peace with the Goths had thus been secured, Constantine turned against the Sarmatians, who were showing themselves to be of doubtful loyalty. But the slaves of the Sarmatians rebelled against all their masters and drove them from the country. These Constantine willingly received, and distributed more than three hundred thousand people of different ages and both sexes through Thrace, Scythia, Macedonia, and Italy<sup>922</sup>.

Eusebius' account of the same events reads as follows:

With respect to the Sarmatians, God himself brought them beneath the rule of Constantine, and subdued a nation swelling with barbaric pride in the following manner. Being attacked by the Scythians<sup>[923]</sup>, they had entrusted their slaves with arms, in order to repel the enemy. These slaves first overcame the invaders and then, turning their weapons against their masters, drove them all from their native land. The expelled Sarmatians found that their only hope of safety was in Constantine's protection: and he, whose familiar habit it was to save men's lives, received them all within the confines of the Roman empire. Those who were capable of serving he incorporated with his own troops: to the rest he allotted lands to cultivate for their own support so that they themselves acknowledged that their past misfortune had produced a happy result in that they now enjoyed Roman liberty in place of savage barbarism. In this manner God added to his dominions many and various barbaric tribes<sup>924</sup>.

Ammianus also included an account of the events in his work:

There were formerly many natives of this kingdom, of high birth and great power, but a secret conspiracy armed their slaves against them; and as among barbarians all right consists in might, they, as they were equal to their masters in ferocity, and superior in number, completely overcame them. And these native chiefs, losing all their wisdom in their fear, fled to the Victohali, whose settlements were at a great distance, thinking it better in the choice of evils to become subject to their protectors than slaves to their own slaves<sup>925</sup>.

What emerges from these reports is that in early 332, the western Goths, the new occupants of the former province of Dacia after its abandonment, had attacked the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain, who then turned to Constantine for help. The Romans provided military assistance to the Sarmatians; both of them were plagued by the Goths. The emperor entrusted his son, Constantine II to resolve the situation. On 20 April 332, he attacked the Goths from the rear, on Sarmatian territory, and inflicted a crushing de-

<sup>922</sup> *Excerpta Valesiana* VI.31. See also section »New Forms of Interaction Between Romans and Barbarians« for a discussion of this passage in connection with the problem of *foederati*.

<sup>923</sup> In this case, the label »Scythians« denoted Goths.

<sup>924</sup> Euseb. *vita Const.* IV.6.

<sup>925</sup> Ammian XVII.12.18-19.

feat upon them. The emperor erected a triumphal column in Constantinople to commemorate the victory (fig. 263)<sup>926</sup>.

The war would have ended there and then (especially because the Sarmatians had probably killed the Gothic leader Vidigoia in battle<sup>927</sup>), had not a rebellion broken out among the inhabitants of the Hungarian Plain. The Arcaragantes, known as the »free« Sarmatians (*sarmatae liberi*), had armed the Limigantes, described as their servants (*sarmatae servi*), a much more populous group. Very little is known about Sarmatian society and the interpretation of these two social groups or tribes is still controversial. A civil war ensued between the two groups after the defeat of the Goths. The sources contradicted each other on this matter. It is unclear whether the Limigantes simply exploited the upheaval to their own advantage and rebelled, as the *Excerpta Valesiana* reported, or whether, as Eusebius claimed, »they had entrusted their slaves with arms in order to repel the enemy«, implying that by arming their »slaves« against the Goths, the Arcaragantes had effectively provided the weapons that their servants turned against their former masters. What was the »secret conspiracy« mentioned by Ammianus? We shall probably never know. Neither should we lose sight of the fact that each of these reports was written from a Roman perspective.

One point that emerges clearly is that the victory on 20 April 332 did not bring peace to the Hungarian Plain. A hoard of over 10,000 barely worn coins found at Nagytétény, whose latest pieces put the date of its concealment at 333, suggests that the conflict in the southern regions of the Hungarian Plain had spread to the north<sup>928</sup>. The crisis continued.

Peace was restored in 334, but only temporarily. The emperor undoubtedly played a role in the settlement. He transplanted a significant mass of Arcaragantes (men, women and children) in the Empire, and in order to ensure that the relocation of this multitude proceeded in an orderly fashion, Constantine spent the greater part of the summer in the area<sup>929</sup>. The others »in their fear, fled to the Victohali, whose settlements were at a great distance«<sup>930</sup>.

A brief detour must be made at this point. While the identification of the new lands of the expelled Sarmatians seems to be an easy exercise, the determination of the territory occupied by the Vandal Victohali during this period poses several difficulties. The Victohali were among the newcomers settling in the Upper Tisza region, the foreland of Dacia, at the time of the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars<sup>931</sup>. Judging from the later events, principally from their joint forays with the Quadi, the Arcaragantes probably searched for new lands for themselves in the northern part of the Hungarian Plain. It must also be noted that some scholars believe that the Upper Tisza region had been occupied by the Gepids around 270, while the Vandals should be sought in the Maros Valley. The cornerstone of this, in our opinion, barely tenable view, is that the Van-

<sup>926</sup> Patsch 1928, 29-30. – Alföldi 1942a, 677. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 47. – Hieron. *Chron.* 2340 c: »The Romans defeated the Goths in the land of the Sarmatians«; *Excerpta Valesiana* VI.35: »Afterwards he destroyed the bravest and most populous of the Gothic tribes in the very heart of the barbarian territory, that is, in the lands of the Sarmatians.« Most scholars agree that the Romans meddled heavily in the affairs of the Barbaricum, especially in the light of later events. It has recently been suggested that the Romans only intervened in the clashes between the Goths and the Sarmatians, and that they refrained from a military intervention during the ensuing Sarmatian internal crisis despite the fact that Constantine was nearby at the time (Singidunum, Viminacium and Naissus). See Wheeler 1998, 84, with further literature.

<sup>927</sup> Jordan (XXXIV.178) mentioned that the delegation led by Priscus passed by the place, not far from Attila's later wooden palace, »where long ago Vidigoia, bravest of the Goths, perished by the guile of the Sarmatians«. For a discussion of this

passage, see Kiss 2008, n. 5. 20. If this passage indeed refers to the events around 332, the clash between the Goths and the Sarmatians took place somewhere in the southern part of the Danube-Tisza interfluvium because Priscus and his companions had already crossed the Tisza and were nearing Attila's palace when they saw the burial of the Gothic leader.

<sup>928</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 677 n. 56.

<sup>929</sup> »The Limigantes Sarmatians, having gathered a force, expelled their masters, who are now called the Arcaragantes, onto Roman soil« (Hieron. *Chron.* 2350 f). The 300,000 mentioned in the sources seems to be greatly exaggerated, even considering the ubiquitous Sarmatian sites and their finds. However, it must also be borne in mind that the late 4<sup>th</sup> century was still characterised by a high population density.

<sup>930</sup> Ammian XVII.12.19.

<sup>931</sup> Dio LXXI.12. – SHA Marc.Ant. XXII. See Alföldi 1942a, n. 216. – Schmidt 1942, 6-8. – Bóna 1986, 61-63. – Godłowski 1993. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1993b. – Kobály 1997-1998.



Fig. 263 Details from Constantine's triumphal column in Istanbul. – (Photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

dals (including the Victovali) launched an attack against Pannonia in 269<sup>932</sup>. This attack was explained by the pressure from the Gepidic migration, as a result of which the Vandals sought to enter the Empire in the Aquincum area. This theory remained unchallenged for some time because no 4<sup>th</sup> century finds that could be securely linked to the Vandals were known from the Upper Tisza region. As a matter of fact, no Gepidic finds were known either. Let us take a closer look at the Gepidic migrations.

The Gepids are first mentioned in 269, during Claudius II's (Gothicus) reign, when an assortment of various, mostly Germanic peoples staged an attack against the Empire. Gepidic and Vandal *deductiones* took place under Probus<sup>933</sup>. These scattered bits of information are insufficient to locate the lands of these peoples. Claudius Mamertinus' panegyric glorifying Emperor Maximianus mentioned a Germanic civil war involving the Gepids and their allies, the Vandals, and was composed after 291<sup>934</sup>. Jordanes described the same event, occurring before 290, at greater length. In his narrative, Fastida, King of the Gepids, demanded land from Ostrogotha, who ruled over both the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths. The Gepids and the Goths clashed in Dacia, the province evacuated by the Romans and subsequently occupied by the Goths. Following their defeat, Fastida and his people returned to their own land »hemmed in by rugged mountains and dense forests«<sup>935</sup>. It is extremely doubtful whether this description can be exclusively identified with an area lying beyond the Csörsz Dyke, but on the inner side of the eastern Carpathians, especially in view of the fact that there is not one shred of archaeological evidence to support this claim. Neither can Bóna's assertion be confirmed that »in the lack of other options«, the Gepids migrated southward along the northern and north-eastern outer side of the Csörsz Dyke<sup>936</sup>. In Bóna's scenario, the Gepids assimilated the Victovali by the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century and had occupied the areas of the Upper Tisza region extending beyond the Csörsz Dyke by the middle third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, whence they advanced southward to Maros after crossing the Körös rivers<sup>937</sup>.

The idea that the middle areas of the Hungarian Plain came under Germanic rule was no doubt inspired by a passage in Jordanes' work that was taken to refer to the mid-330s<sup>938</sup>. Jordanes recounted that the Vandals led by Visumar, after having been earlier driven by the Gepids to the area between the Maros and Körös rivers, were defeated by the Ostrogoths advancing from Dacia under their king, Geberich. The battle is assumed to have been fought in the Maros Valley. Accepting the credibility of this information, Ammianus' remark that the »Free Sarmatians« submitted to the Vandal Victovali was taken to refer to the area between the Maros and Körös rivers. True enough, hundreds of 4<sup>th</sup> century Sarmatian sites are known from this area, but traces hinting at a Germanic presence are entirely lacking<sup>939</sup>, implying that neither a Vandal, nor a Gepidic presence can be assumed for this period. If the Gepids had indeed assimilated the Vandals in the 4<sup>th</sup> century as assumed by Bóna, the latter's presence can be discarded both in the south and in the north because this meant the end of their life as an independent ethnic group. Bóna's opinion that Jordanes had no idea of the 4<sup>th</sup> century history of the Vandals and that he had pieced together this part of his narrative from various earlier – and often misunderstood – works is wholly justified<sup>940</sup>. Bóna's opinion was seconded

932 Schmidt 1941, 105-106. – Alföldi 1942a, 673. For the sources on the incursion, see Kovács 2008, 45-46. 59.

933 SHA Claud. VI. – SHA Prob. XVIII.2.

934 Mamertinus III [XI] 17,1 in: Lakatos 1973, 51.

935 Jordan XVII.97-100.

936 It seems to be contradictory in itself that, according to Bóna's hypothesis, the Gepids' arrival in 269 would have led to the westward shift of the Vandals, while the events of 290 led to a southward migration.

937 Bóna 2001, 142-143. – Bóna et al. 1993, 52-53. Contrary to Bóna, Horedt 1971, believed that the Gepids' initial settlement territory should be sought by the River Prut; Schmidt 1941, 223. 530, located them by the River Olt and Wolfram 2001,

68. 72, to the Maros region. The latter did not regard the issue as closed owing to the lack of sources. For a recent overview of the arguments, counter-arguments and the relevant literature, see Bierbrauer 2006.

938 Jordan XXII.113.

939 Párducz was no doubt influenced by this passage when trying to identify Germanic/Gepidic elements in his Tápé-Malajdok group, which he dated to the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century (Párducz/Korek 1946/1948, 312; Párducz 1950a, 258-259). Párducz's theory has been challenged on several counts, see Margit Nagy 1997, 49 n. 29.

940 Mócsy/Bóna 1965, 127-128, with the earlier literature.

by M. Kiss, editor of a recent Hungarian translation of Jordanes' *Getica*. In her view, the passage claiming that »at the time when the Vandals were dwelling in this region, war was begun against them by Geberich, king of the Goths, on the shore of the river Marisia«, the Vandals were defeated and that the Romans resettled the few survivors does not refer to the Vandals, but to the Sarmatians. Jordanes, who actively disliked the Vandals, apparently commemorated a distorted version of the events of 334 because there is no record of Vandals settling in the Empire at this time<sup>941</sup>.

Archaeology alone can clarify the question of the Gepidic migration and the Vandals' movements. Find material will no doubt resolve whether the Vandals had settled in the Upper Tisza region (which seems more plausible to us), or in the area between the Maros and Körös rivers. At present, only so much can be stated that the vicinities of the Verecke Pass and the Maros Valley both occupied key positions in the Sarmatian Barbaricum. In the absence of burials and any reliable references in the written sources, the ethnic attribution of the 4<sup>th</sup> century population in the region's section extending to the Csörsz Dyke is virtually impossible. Both areas were characterised by a remarkably colourful ethnic patchwork throughout the Roman Age. The earliest assemblage from the Körös region and the Banat reflecting a Sarmatian presence comes from Vărşand and Sânnicolau Mare (**fig. 151, 3**)<sup>941a</sup>. At present, we have only these two assemblages predating the Marcomannic-Sarmatian Wars. The other approximately fifty currently known sites suggest that the contact zone between the Sarmatians and their eastern neighbours (who, at least before the surrender of Dacia, can most probably be identified with a Romanised Dacian or a Dacian-Roman group) lay along the Vărşand-Arad line (**fig. 175**)<sup>942</sup>.

The continuation of this line can be extended to Tărian-Carei in the north. While there is no break in the material culture of the areas up to the Csörsz Dyke in the Upper Tisza region, the area beyond the rampart is more complicated. Sarmatian finds occur in a single block up to the Nagykálló-Oros line until the close of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The greater part of the Nyír Plateau was probably part of the Sarmatian lands. The Szatmár-Bereg Plain was occupied by groups of the Bereg culture, characterised by stamped grey pottery (**figs 253-254. 264**). The find assemblages from contemporary settlements lying near each other to the east and north of the Sarmatian block show an interesting variety at the turn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries: some are dominated by Przeworsk pottery (**fig. 265**); some by wheel-turned grey wares more typical for the Sarmatians (**fig. 266**). At the same time, there have been few advances in identifying the finds of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (stage C3), especially as regards the grave goods from burials, even though this would lead us closer to clarifying ethnic issues. Some influence of the Maroszentanna-Černjahov culture can also be demonstrated (Bervenii-Halmos, Lazuri-Rătuł lui Bela), which is hardly surprising given the proximity of Transylvania (**fig. 267**)<sup>943</sup>.

The distribution of Sarmatian finds in north-western Romania can be traced as far as Carei-Pir in the Ier Valley (**fig. 268**). The northern boundary can be drawn at Pişcolt until the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Dörner assigned the grave assemblages uncovered at Dorobanţi, Şeitin and Oradea-Szalkadomb to this horizon, based on the brooches from the first site, the brooch and the glass beaker from the second (in fact, the beaker represented the Kowalk type and should thus be dated later), and the glass beaker from the third. However, the chronological position of these assemblages is still uncertain<sup>944</sup>. Moving farther to the west, the later 4<sup>th</sup> century coin of the Empress Julia found in Grave 1 of the four Sarmatian burials unearthed at Kisvárda-Nagyboldogasszony Street suggests that the Sarmatians had not been ousted from this area during this period. Recent findings of Sarmatian graves dated to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century support this

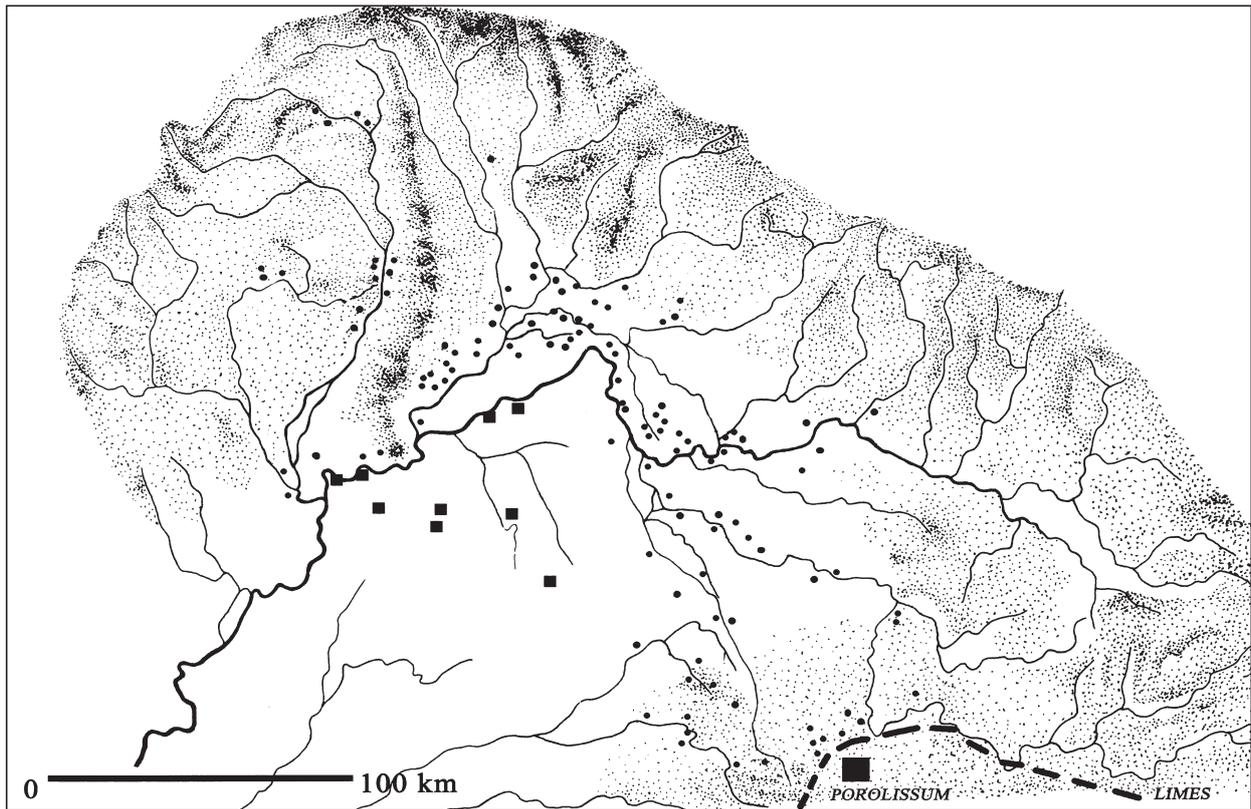
<sup>941</sup> Jordan XXII.113-115. – Kiss 2002, 143 n. 134.

<sup>941a</sup> Köhegyi 1985, 273-274. – Bejan/Măruia/Tănase 2011.

<sup>942</sup> Dörner 1971, 687. – Hügel/Barbu 1997, esp. 545.

<sup>943</sup> We are greatly indebted to R. Gindele and J. Némethi for sharing their expertise on the finds from this region. See also Gindele 2010, 148. 167-168. – Némethi 1999, 156-157.

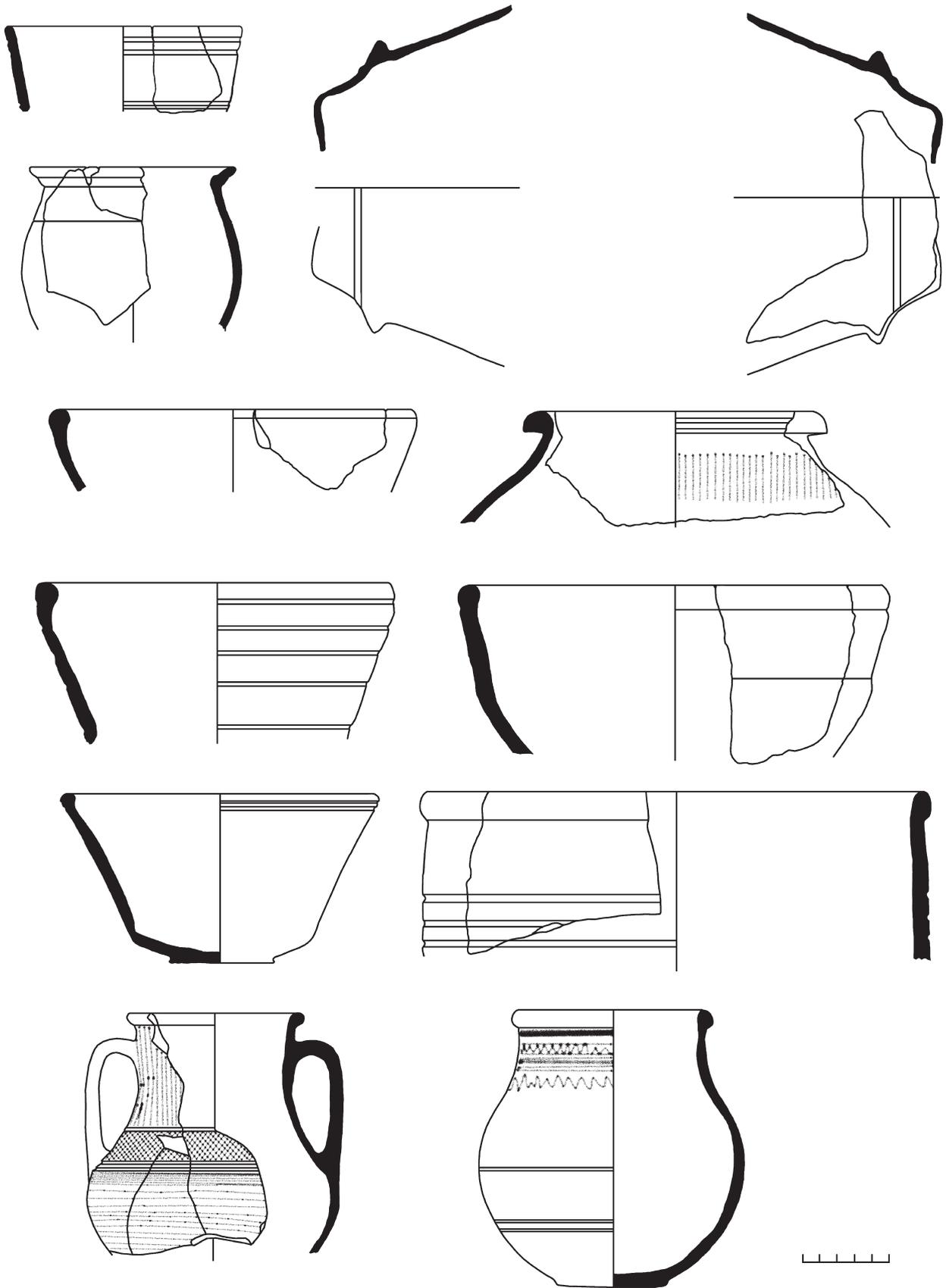
<sup>944</sup> Némethi/Gindele 1997, 605-606; 1998/1999, 80-81. 84-85.



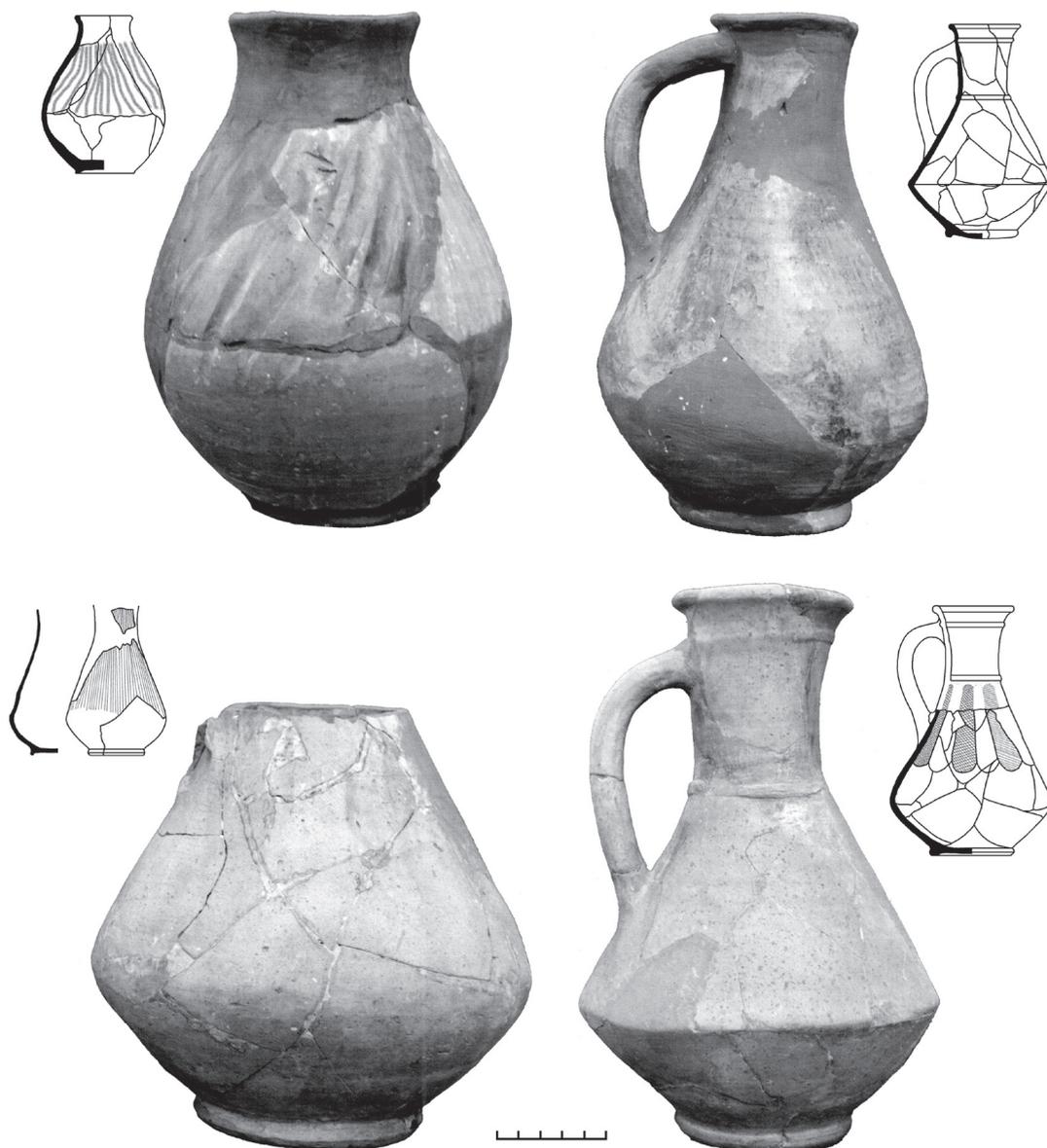
**Fig. 264** Distribution of the stamped pottery wares of the Bereg culture (black square finds from Sarmatian context). – (After Gindele/Istvánovits 2011, map 2).



**Fig. 265** Przeworsk type pottery of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries from Lazuri-Rătul lui Bela, north-western Romania. – (After Gindele 2010, pl. 118, 3. 5-7).



**Fig. 266** Sarmatian type pottery of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries from Pișcolt-Lutărie, north-western Romania. – (After Gindele 2010, figs 54, 3. 5. 7-13; 55, 5. 10).

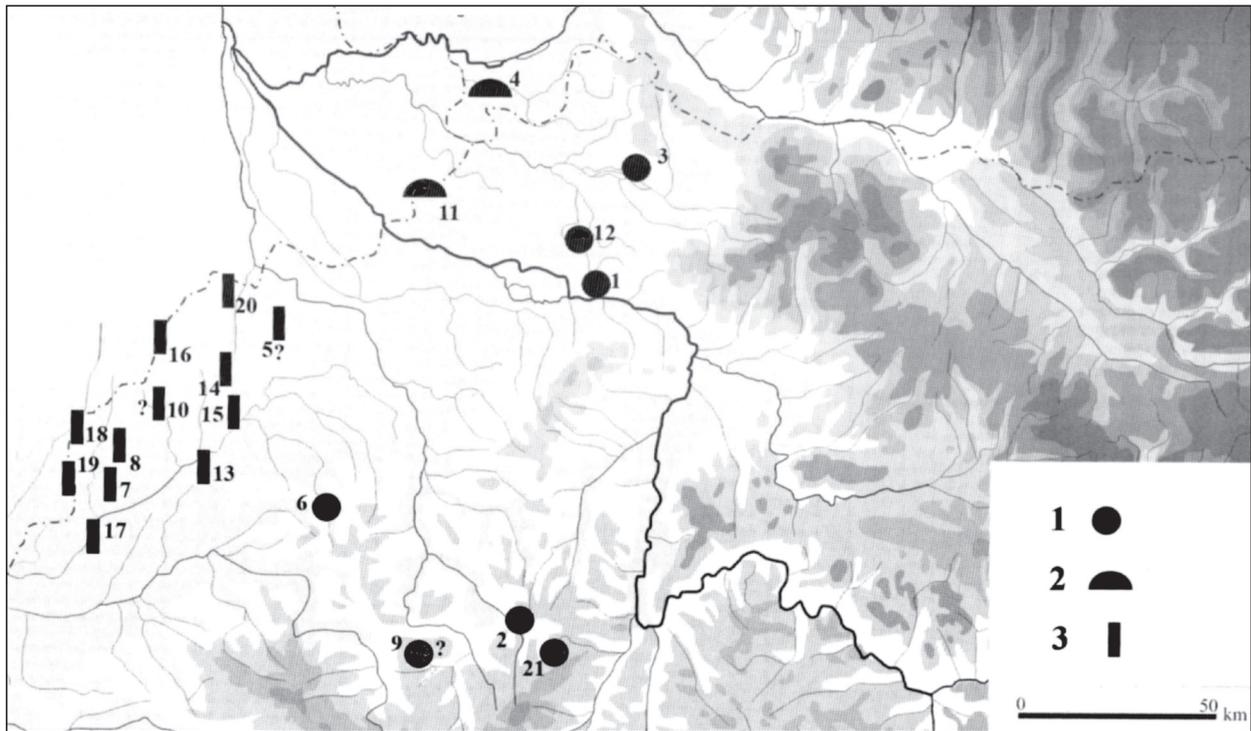


**Fig. 267** Pottery reflecting the influence of the Maroszentanna-Černjahov culture from Lazuri-Râtul lui Bela, north-western Romania. – (After Gindele 2010, pl. 116).

suggestion (**fig. 269**). Profound changes in the material from the eastern part of the Upper Tisza region can be noted after the evacuation of Dacia when wheel-turned pottery became dominant and the use of stamped pottery decoration more widespread. At the same time, any reconstruction of region's ethnic attribution is virtually impossible owing to the lack of burials.

Returning to the events of the Sarmatian civil war, the fate of the Arcaragantes is relatively well-known from the sources: some were settled in the Empire; others fled to the Victovali. The subsequent history of the Limigantes is less clear. Later reports would suggest that they occupied the abandoned Banatian lands of the Arcaragantes.

After 334 (between 334 and the late 350s), a generation-long period of relative peace ensued along the Empire's frontier with the Sarmatians. The Sarmatians did not even react to the domestic crisis caused by the bids for the throne in 350-352 with the usual incursions. The only exception is a minor skirmish in the winter of 338/339, perhaps the reason that the young Emperor Constans was awarded the title *Sar-*



**Fig. 268** Grave finds from north-western Romania and neighbouring territories of Hungary and Ukraine: **1** cremation graves. – **2** cremation graves with barrows. – **3** inhumation graves. – (After Gindele 2010-2011, map 2).

*maticus*<sup>945</sup>. The obvious reason for this calm could be that the clashes with the Goths, their own civil war and resettlement in the Empire had seriously depleted the Sarmatian population.

The peace was shattered again in the mid-350s. Zosimus mentioned that in 355 the Sarmatians and the Quadi ravaged Pannonia and Moesia Superior without encountering any opposition<sup>946</sup>. The coin hoards found in northern and north-eastern Valeria are generally linked to this incursion. The hoard from the fort at Ács-Vaspuszta must be highlighted in this respect: the latest coin in this hoard was issued in 354, which in Gabler's view indicated that the barbarian raids began in 355<sup>947</sup>. In contrast, Mócsy argued that Ammianus had been mistaken in dating the onslaught against Pannonia Secunda and Moesia Prima by the Quadi and the Sarmatians to 356 because the imperial itinerary clearly indicates that



**Fig. 269** Buckle dated to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century from Sarmatian context, Nagykálló-Ipari park (Industrial Park), Grave 153. – (JAM, G.Pintye's excavation and courtesy, unpublished; photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

<sup>945</sup> Mócsy 1972, 88-89. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 47. Alföldi 1942a, 678 n. 62, suggested that the title *Sarmaticus* actually refers to earlier events and that these years should be regarded as a period of peace as well.

<sup>946</sup> Zosimus III.1.1.

<sup>947</sup> Gabler 1972. – Dittrich 1984, 54 n. 3.

Constantius II arrived in Pannonia in the summer of 357, meaning that the events in question can hardly have taken place much earlier. The emperor launched a punitive campaign in spring next year in retaliation for the barbarians' incursions during the winter of 357/358<sup>948</sup>. Mócsy's dating does not exclude a possible barbarian raid in 355 because Ammianus also noted that the emperor »received *frequent* and trustworthy intelligence that the Sarmatians and the Quadi [...] were [...] overrunning Pannonia and the second province of Moesia [...]«<sup>949</sup>. Let us turn to the historian for an account of the events of the year 358:

In the mean time, while the emperor was passing the winter quietly at Sirmium, he received frequent and trustworthy intelligence that the Sarmatians and the Quadi, two tribes contiguous to each other, and similar in manners and mode of warfare, were conjointly overrunning Pannonia and the second province of Moesia, in straggling detachments. [...] Therefore, after the venial equinox was past, the emperor, having collected a strong body of soldiers, marched forth under the guidance of propitious fortune. Having arrived at a suitable place, he crossed the Danube, which was now flooded from the melting of the snow, by a bridge of boats, and descended on the lands of the barbarians, which he began to lay waste. They, being taken by surprise through the rapidity of his march, and seeing that the battalions of his warlike army were at their throats, when they had not supposed it possible that such a force could be collected for a year, had no courage to make a stand, but, as the only means of escaping unexpected destruction, took to flight. When many had been slain, fear fettering their steps, those whose speed had saved them from death hid themselves among the secret defiles of the mountains, and from thence beheld their country destroyed by the sword, which they might have delivered if they had resisted with as much vigour as they fled. These events took place in that part of Sarmatia which looks towards the second Pannonia. Another military expedition, conducted with equal courage, routed the troops of the barbarians in Valeria, who were plundering and destroying everything within their reach. Terrified at the greatness of this disaster, the Sarmatians, under pretext of imploring peace, planned to divide their force into three bodies, and to attack our army while in a state of fancied security; so that they should neither be able to prepare their weapons, nor avoid wounds, nor (which is the last resource in a desperate case) take to flight. There were with the Sarmatians likewise on this occasion, as partners in their danger, the Quadi, who had often before taken part in the injuries inflicted on us; but their prompt boldness did not help them on this occasion, rushing as they did into open danger. For many of them were slain, and the survivors escaped among the hills, with which they were familiar. And as this event raised the spirits and courage of our army, they united in solid columns, and marched with speed into the territories of the Quadi; who, having learnt by the past to dread the evils which impended over them, came boldly into the emperor's presence to implore peace as suppliants, since he was inclined to be merciful in such cases. On the day appointed for settling the conditions, one of their princes named Zizais, a young man of great stature, marshalled the ranks of the Sarmatians to offer their entreaties of peace in the fashion of an army; and as soon as they came within sight, he threw away his arms, and fell like one dead, prostrating himself on his breast before the emperor; his very voice from fear refusing its office, when he ought to have uttered his entreaties, he awakened the more pity, making many attempts, and being scarcely able from the violence of his sobs to give utterance to his wishes.

<sup>948</sup> Mócsy 1972, 89. For a detailed discussion of Ammianus Marcellinus' references to these events and their assessment, see Dittrich 1984, 53-85. <sup>949</sup> Ammian XVII.12.1, italics added for emphasis.

At last, having recovered himself, and being bidden to rise up, he knelt, and having regained the use of his tongue, he implored pardon for his offences. His followers also, whose mouths had been closed by fear while the fate of their leader was still doubtful, were admitted to offer the same petition, and when he, being commanded to rise, gave them the signal which they had been long expecting, to present their petition, they all threw away their javelins and their shields, and held out their hands in an attitude of supplication, striving to surpass their prince in the humility of their entreaties<sup>950</sup>. Among the other Sarmatians the prince had brought with him three chiefs of tribes, Rumo, Zinafer, and Fragiledus<sup>951</sup>, and many nobles who came to offer the same petition with earnest hope of success. And they, being elated at the promise of safety, undertook to make amends for their former deeds of hostility by performing the conditions now imposed on them; giving up willingly into the power of the Romans themselves, their wives and children, and all their possessions. The kindness of the emperor, united with justice, subdued them; and he bidding them be of good cheer and return to their homes, they restored our prisoners. They also brought the hostages who were demanded of them, and promised prompt obedience to all the emperor's commands. Then, encouraged by this example of our clemency, other chieftains came with all their tribe, by name Araharius and Usafer, men of distinction among the nobles, and at the head of a great force of their countrymen; one of them being chief of a portion of the Quadi who dwelt beyond the mountains, and the other of a division of the Sarmatians: the two being united by the proximity of their territories, and their natural ferocity. But the emperor, fearing the number of their followers, lest, while pretending to make a treaty, they should suddenly rise up in arms, separated them; ordering those who were acting for the Sarmatians to retire for a while, while he was examining into the affairs of Araharius and the Quadi. And when they presented themselves before him, bowing according to their national custom, as they were not able to clear themselves of heavy charges, so, fearing extreme punishment, they gave the hostages which were demanded, though they had never before been compelled to give pledges for their fidelity. These matters being thus equitably and successfully settled, Usafer was admitted to offer his petition, though Araharius loudly protested against this, and maintained that the peace ratified with him ought to comprehend Usafer also, as an ally of his though of inferior rank, and subject to his command. But when the question was discussed, the Sarmatians were pronounced independent of any other power, as having been always vassals of the Roman empire; and they willingly embraced the proposal of giving hostages as a pledge of the maintenance of tranquillity. After this there came a vast number of nations and princes, flocking in crowds, when they heard that Araharius had been allowed to depart in safety, imploring us to withdraw the sword which was at their throats; and they also obtained the peace which they requested on similar terms, and without any delay gave as hostages the sons of their nobles whom they brought from the interior of the country; and they also surrendered, as we insisted, all their prisoners, from whom they parted as unwill-

<sup>950</sup> Kiss 2008, 1-2. Ammianus' quoted passage is set as an example of *deditio* (submission), followed by the ceremony of *adoratio* (adoration), a spectacular visual display of a population surrendering to the Romans.

<sup>951</sup> Curiously enough, a third name, that of Batherus, also appears in the *Annalium Boiorum*, a chronicle written by the medieval Bavarian humanist Aventinus: »Constantius in the spring time laid a pontoon bridge on the Danube and crossed with his army into the part of Germania and Sarmatia, which faced Pannonia Secunda and Valeria. The inhabitants escaped

through the hills. The Roman army, after everything had been destroyed, advanced toward the neighbouring region of the Quadi. It levelled and scattered whatever was in the way. The kings and »little kings« [*reguli*] of the Quadi and Sarmatians, Ziza, Fraegiledus, Rumarus, and Batherus came as suppliants to Constantius and gave captives. They begged for pardon of past things [i. e. offences] and obtained it. They gave hostages« (Aventinus 113-114), with thanks to Wheeler for the English translation.

ingly as from their own relations. When these arrangements were completed, the emperor's anxiety was transferred to the Sarmatians, who were objects of pity rather than of anger [...] There were formerly many natives of this kingdom, of high birth and great power, but a secret conspiracy armed their slaves against them; and as among barbarians all right consists in might, they, as they were equal to their masters in ferocity, and superior in number, completely overcame them. And these native chiefs [Arcaragantes], losing all their wisdom in their fear, fled to the Victohali, whose settlements were at a great distance, thinking it better in the choice of evils to become subject to their protectors than slaves to their own slaves. But afterwards, when they had obtained pardon from us, and had been received as faithful allies, they deplored their hard fate, and invoked our direct protection. Moved by the undeserved hardship of their lot, the emperor, when they were assembled before him, addressed them with kind words in the presence of his army, and commanded them for the future to own no master but himself and the Roman generals. And that the restoration of their liberty might carry with it additional dignity, he made Zizais their king, a man, as the event proved, deserving the rewards of eminent fortune, and faithful. After these glorious transactions, none of the Sarmatians were allowed to depart till all our prisoners had returned, as we had before insisted<sup>952</sup>.

The date of the clashes is noteworthy. The emperor marched off from Sirmium after 21 March and crossed the swollen river. That the barbarians were taken by surprise is quite understandable, for it was hardly a customary practice to cross a river in times of flood and the roads were no doubt muddy from the spring thaw. The provisioning of the army must have posed a formidable task in the season when supplies were running short after winter<sup>953</sup>.

In view of the topographic description, the events in the foreland of Pannonia Secunda can be located to the eastern fringes of the Banat, where the mountains level out into the plain. One part of the Roman army defeated the Sarmatians somewhere in this area<sup>954</sup>. Other Roman troops massacred the Sarmatians and Quadi in the Barbaricum bordering on Valeria. Usafer, who took part in the fighting was a vassal of the Quadi, and his people probably dwelt in the area where there is the strongest mix of Sarmatian and Quadic material (**fig. 270**). The Quadi occupied the region facing the Danube Bend and the areas to the west on the left bank of the Danube. Their southernmost finds are known from the northern part of Budapest. The Quadic finds are strongly interspersed with Sarmatian material in the area south of the Börzsöny Mountains along the Danube (**fig. 271**)<sup>955</sup>, suggesting a separate local group with its own »prince« that can probably be identified with Usafer and his people in this period.

The description and number of the embassies appearing at the peace negotiations suggest that the ethnic tapestry of the Hungarian Plain during the Roman Age was far more colourful than earlier believed<sup>956</sup>.

The final settlement of the problems posed by the Limigantes was addressed next:

[...] the public interests required that the army should at once march against the Limigantes, the revolted slaves of the Sarmatians, who had perpetrated many atrocities with impunity. For, as soon as the countrymen of free blood had attacked us, they also, forgetful of their former con-

<sup>952</sup> Ammian XVII.12.1-20.

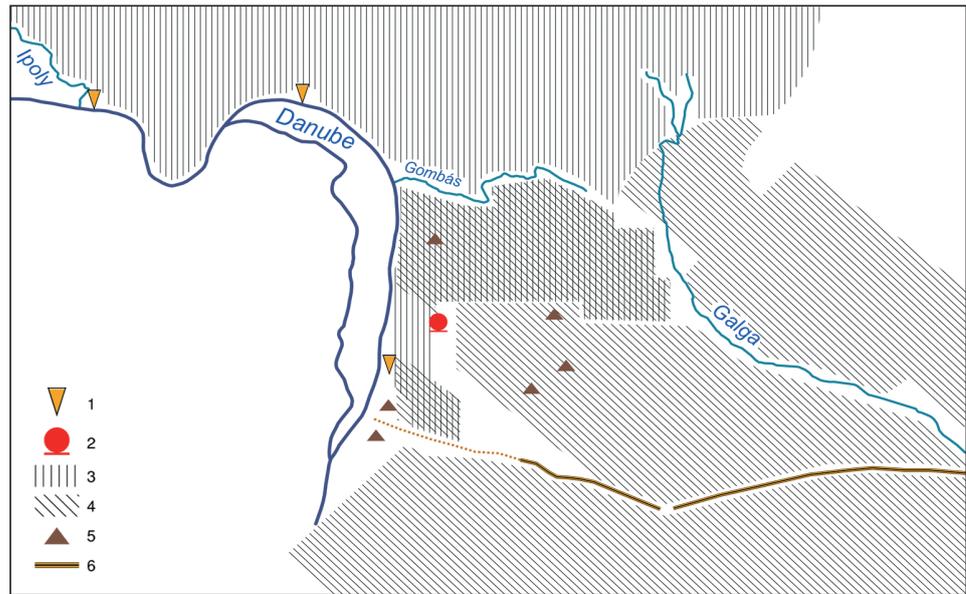
<sup>953</sup> See Ammianus (XIX.11.2) for the difficulties encountered during the organisation of the army's supply.

<sup>954</sup> This would also imply that the area in question was inhabited by Sarmatians who were not grouped among the Limigantes because Ammianus explicitly states that the Romans began their march against the »servant Sarmatians« afterwards (see below).

<sup>955</sup> Kulcsár 1997a, 708.

<sup>956</sup> The detailed analysis of the immense corpus of archaeological finds dated to the Late Empire will eventually enable the identification of individual groups based on the relatively well-definable distribution of certain artefact types, such as disc brooches decorated with human faces.

**Fig. 270** The boundary between the Quadic and the Sarmatian lands in the Danube Bend. **1** Roman ports. – **2** Roman camp. – **3** Quadi. – **4** Sarmatians. – **5** 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century Sarmatian burials. – **6** Csörsz Dyke. – (After Dinnyés 2011, figs 1-2, map L. Veszprémi).



dition, thinking to take advantage of a favourable opportunity, burst through the Roman frontier, in this wickedness alone agreeing with their masters and enemies. But on deliberation we determined that their offence also should be punished with more moderation than its greatness deserved; and that vengeance should limit itself to removing them to a distance where they could no longer harass our territories<sup>[957]</sup>. The consciousness of a long series of crimes made them fearful of danger. And therefore, suspecting that the weight of war was about to fall upon them, they were prepared, as exigency might require, to resort to stratagem, arms, or entreaties. But at the first sight of our army they became as it were panic-stricken; and being reduced to despair, they begged their lives, offering a yearly tribute, and a body of their chosen youths for our army, and promising perpetual obedience. But they were prepared to refuse if they were ordered to emigrate (as they showed by their gestures and countenances), trusting to the strength of the place where, after they had expelled their masters, they had fixed their abode. For the Parthiscus waters this land, proceeding with oblique windings till it falls into the Danube. But while it flows unmixed, it passes through a vast extent of country, which, near its junction with the Danube, it narrows into a very small corner, so that over on the side of the Danube those who live in that district are protected from the attack of the Romans, and on the side of the Parthiscus they are secured from any irruptions of the barbarians. Since along its course the greater part of the ground is frequently under water from the floods, and always swampy and full of osiers, so as to be quite impassable to strangers; and besides the mainland there is an island close to the mouth of the river, which the stream itself seems to have separated into its present state. Accordingly, at the desire of the emperor, they came with native arrogance to our bank of the river, not, as the result showed, with the intention of obeying his commands, but that they might not seem alarmed at the presence of his soldiers. And there they stood, stubbornly showing that they had come bent on resistance. And as the emperor had foreseen that

<sup>957</sup> This can be interpreted as meaning, either that the Empire needed reinforcements and tried to recruit them from among the Limigantes, or that the victory was not guaranteed.



**Fig. 271** Quadic finds from the boundary between the Quadic and the Sarmatian lands from Vác-Csörögi rét. – (TIM, V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári).

this might happen, he secretly divided his army into several squadrons, and by the rapidity of their movements hemmed in the barbarians between his own lines. And then, standing on a mound, with a few of his officers and a small body-guard, he gently admonished them not to give way to ferocity. But they, wavering and in doubt, were agitated by various feelings, and mingling craft with their fury, they had recourse to arms and to prayers at the same time. And meditating to make a sudden attack on those of our men who were nearest, they threw their shields some distance before them, with the intent that while they made some steps forward to recover them, they might thus steal a little ground without giving any indication of their purpose. And as it was now nearly evening, and the departing light warned us to avoid further delay, our soldiers raised their standards and fell upon them with a fiery onset. And they, in close order, directed all their force against the mound on which (as has been already said) the emperor himself was standing, fixing their eyes on him, and uttering fierce outcries against him. Our army was indignant at such insane audacity, and forming into a triangle, to which military simplicity has given the name of »the boar's head,« with a violent charge they scattered the barbarians now pressing vigorously upon the emperor; on the right our infantry slew their infantry, and on the left our cavalry dashed among their squadrons of light horsemen. The prae-

torian cohort, carefully guarding the emperor, spared neither the breasts of those who attacked nor the backs of those who fled, and the barbarians, yielding in their stubbornness to death alone, showed by their horrid cries that they grieved not so much at their own death as at the triumph of our army. And, beside the dead, many lay with their legs cut off, and so deprived of the resource of flight, others had lost their hands; some who had received no wound were crushed by the weight of those who fell upon them, and bore their torments in profound silence. Nor, amid all their sufferings, did any one of them ask for mercy, or throw away his sword, or implore a speedy death, but clinging resolutely to their arms, wounded as they were, they thought it a lesser evil to be subdued by the strength of another than by their own consciences, and at times they were heard to grumble that what had happened was the work of fortune, not of their deserts. And so this whole battle was brought to an end in half an hour, in which such numbers of barbarians fell that nothing but the fact of our victory proved that there had been any battle at all. Those in arms had scarcely been routed when the relations of the dead, of every age and sex, were brought forward in crowds, having been dragged from their humble dwellings. And all their former pride being now gone, they descended to the lowest depths of servile obedience, and after a very short time nothing but barrows of the dead and bands of captives were beheld. So, the heat of strife and the excitement of victory stimulating our men, they rose up to destroy all who had escaped the battle, or who were lying hidden in their dwellings. And when, eager for the blood of the barbarians, our soldiers had reached the spot, they tore to pieces the slight straw-thatched huts; nor could even the strongest-built cottages, or the stoutest beams save any one from death. At last, when everything was set on fire, and when no one could be concealed any longer, since every protection for their lives was destroyed, they either perished obstinately in the flames, or else, if they avoided the fire and sallied out, they only escaped that destruction to fall beneath the sword of their enemies. Some, however, did escape from the weapons of the enemy and from the spreading flames, and committed themselves to the stream, trusting to their skill in swimming to enable them to reach the further bank; but many of them were drowned, and others were transfixed by our javelins, so that the winding stream of the vast river was discoloured with blood, and thus, by the agency of both elements, did the indignation and valour of the conquerors destroy the Sarmatians. After these events it was determined to leave the barbarians no hope nor comfort of life; and after burning their houses and carrying off their families, an order was given to collect boats in order to hunt out those who, being on the opposite bank of the river, had escaped the attack of our men. And immediately, that the alacrity of our warriors might have no time to cool, some light-armed troops were embarked in boats, and led by secret paths to occupy the retreats of the Sarmatians. The barbarians at first were deceived by seeing only the boats of their own country, and crews with whom they were acquainted. But when the weapons glittered in the distance, and they perceived that what they feared was upon them, they sought refuge in their accustomed marshes. And our soldiers pursuing them with great animosity, slew numbers of them, and gained a victory in a place where it had not been supposed that any soldier could find a footing, much less do any bold action. After the Anicenses [Amicenses] had thus been routed and almost destroyed, we proceeded at once to attack the Ticenses [Picenses], who are so called from the regions which they inhabit, which border on one another; and these tribes had fancied themselves the more secure from the disasters of their allies, which they had heard of by frequent rumours. To crush them (for it was an arduous task for those who did not know the country to follow men scattered in many directions as they were) the aid of Taifali and of the free-born

Sarmatians was sought. And as the nature of the ground separated the auxiliary battalions from each other, our own troops took the ground nearest Moesia, the Taifali that nearest to their own settlements, while the Free Sarmatians occupied that in front of their original position. The Limigantes, alarmed at the still fresh examples of nations subdued and crushed by us, for a long time hesitated and wavered whether they should attack us or ask for peace, having arguments of no small weight for either line of conduct. But at last, through the influence of the council of the elders, the idea of surrender prevailed; and the submission also of those who had dared to attack their free-born masters was added to our numerous victories; and the rest of them, who had previously despised their masters, thinking them unwarlike and easily subdued, now finding them stronger than themselves, submitted to them. Accordingly, having received pledges of their safety, and having quitted the defence of their mountains, the greater portion of them came with speed to the Roman camp, and they spread over a vast extent of ground, bringing with them their parents, their children, their wives, and all the movable treasures which their rapid motions had allowed them to carry off. And those who it had been supposed would rather lose their lives than quit their country, while they mistook their mad licentiousness for liberty, now submitted to obey our orders, and to take up another abode in peace and good faith, so as to be undisturbed for the future by wars or seditions. And having been thus accepted as subjects, in accordance with their own wish as it was believed, they remained quiet for a time; but afterwards they broke out in destructive wickedness, as shall be related at the proper time. While our affairs were thus prospering, Illyricum was put in a state of twofold security, since the emperor, in endeavouring by two means to accomplish this object, succeeded in both. He brought back and established in their ancient homes the people who had been banished, whom, although they were objects of suspicion from their natural fickleness, he believed would go on more moderately than of old. And to crown this kindness, he set over them as a king, not one of low birth, but the very man whom they themselves had formerly chosen, as eminent for all the virtues of mind and body. After such a wise action, Constantius, being now raised above all fear, and having received from the unanimous consent of his soldiers the title of *Sarmaticus*, from the name of the nation which he had subdued; and being now about to leave the army, summoned all his cohorts and centuries and maniples, and mounting the tribune, surrounded by the standards and eagles, and by a great number of soldiers of all ranks, he addressed the troops in these words, choosing his topics as usual so as to gain the favour of all. »[...] we have marched into Pannonia, in order [...] to strengthen our tottering interests in that country. And after everything was prepared, we set forth [...] at the end of the spring, and undertook a great enterprise; first of all taking care that the countless darts of the enemy should not prevent us from making a bridge. And when, with no great trouble, this had been accomplished, after we had set our foot upon the enemy's territories, we defeated, with very little loss to ourselves, the Sarmatians, who with obstinate courage set themselves to resist us to the death. And we also crushed the Quadi, who were bringing reinforcements to the Sarmatians, and who with similar courage attacked our noble legions. These tribes, after heavy losses sustained in their attacks, and their stubborn and toilsome resistance, have at length learnt the power of our valour, and throwing away their arms, have allowed their hands, prepared for fighting, to be bound behind their backs; and seeing that their only hope of safety is in prayer, have fallen at the feet of your merciful emperor, whose wars they found are usually successful. Having got rid of these enemies, we with equal courage defeated the Limigantes, and after we had put numbers of them to the sword, the rest found their only means of escaping danger lay

in fleeing to their hiding-places in the marshes. And when these things were successfully terminated, it seemed to be a seasonable opportunity for mercy. So we compelled the Limigantes to remove to very distant lands, that they might not be able any more to move to our injury; and we spared the greatest part of them. And we made Zizais king over the free-born portion of them, sure that he would be faithful to us, and thinking it more honour to create a king for the barbarians than to take one from them, the dignity being increased by this honourable consideration, that the ruler whom we thus gave them had before been elected and accepted by them. So we and the republic have in one campaign obtained a fourfold reward: first, vengeance on our guilty assailants; next, abundance of captive slaves from the enemy, for valour is entitled to those rewards. [...] Lastly, I myself have the well-won spoil of a surname derived from the enemy the title of *Sarmaticus* [...]«<sup>958</sup>.

Ammianus reported that the Limigantes attacked Moesia at the same time as the Arcaragantes' onslaught against Pannonia. The Roman troops swiftly retaliated. Ammianus spoke of two Limigantes groups. It is generally accepted that the pacification of the Limigantes in 334 involved their settlement in two groups in the southern part of the Hungarian Plain. It has been suggested that the two Limigantes groups mentioned by Ammianus – the Amicenses and Picenses – were named after Acumincum (Slankamen) and Pincum (Veliko Gradište) (fig. 258) because they had been placed under the supervision of the troops garrisoned in the two *limes* forts on the Danube. In this case, they had apparently been settled around the Tisza mouth, in the Banat and perhaps in the southern part of the Danube-Tisza interfluve<sup>959</sup>.

The Roman troops first marched against the Amicenses, who in our opinion lived by the Tisza mouth, occupying both banks of the river. The imperial army massacred them all; very few managed to escape to the surrounding marshland. The Romans next turned against the Picenses, the other Limigantes group, who lived east of the Amicenses dispersed over a larger area. The Romans attacked from Moesia, i. e. from the south, while their Taifal allies swooped down on their neighbours, the Limigantes Sarmatians, from the east. The Arcaragantes led by Zizais also participated in the battle. They are described as arriving from the north, which is hardly surprising given that they are said to have fled to the Victovali in 334.

The Romans did not simply expel the intruders from the Empire's territory, but also from their own lands. The question again arises as to where exactly they moved. Patsch believed that the Limigantes retreated to the Szamos-Tisza angle<sup>960</sup> and that their lands were again occupied by the Arcaragantes.

The eviction of the Limigantes and the re-settlement of the Arcaragantes in their earlier territory did not provide a lasting solution<sup>961</sup>. A year later, in early spring 359 sometime between 25 March and 22 May<sup>962</sup>:

<sup>958</sup> Ammian XVII.13.

<sup>959</sup> Patsch 1925, 183-189, was the first to derive the name of the Amicenses and the Picenses from Acumincum and Pincum. Mócsy 1972, 88, apparently followed this conjecture when he suggested that the military commanders of the two *limes* forts exercised authority over the two groups. Alföldi 1942a, n. 31, rejected the etymology for the Amicenses, but agreed with Patsch regarding Pincum because in contrast to the Banat, ethnonyms created from toponyms were common in Moesia. According to Vulić 1929/1930, their settlement territory lay in the Bačka. He also suggested that while the Amicenses were a group of Sarmatians, the Picenses living at both sides of the Danube close to the River Pincus were not of Sarmatian stock. However, this idea was not taken up by later research. His estimate of 600,000 can be clearly rejected (Vulić based this number on the *Excerpta Valesiana*, according to which Constantine

had transplanted 300,000 Free Sarmatians, and on Ammianus' claim that the servant Sarmatians outnumbered their masters, meaning that taken together, they numbered over 600,000). Dittrich 1984, 67, located the Amicenses by the mouth of the Tisza and the Picenses to their east.

<sup>960</sup> Patsch 1925, 191; 1928, 38. The region's archaeological finds have been described at greater length in the above. Soproni 1978, 117, accepted Patsch's arguments, while Mócsy 1972, 91, claimed that the Limigantes' new settlement territory lay in the northern part of the Danube-Tisza interfluve. We may concur with Dittrich 1984, 74-75, that Ammianus' report indicates that the area in question lay relatively far from the Empire's border and well to the north of their earlier lands. The Upper Tisza region suggested by Patsch conforms to these criteria.

<sup>961</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 678-679 n. 63.

<sup>962</sup> Barceló 1992, 427.

[...] intelligence full of importance and danger reached Constantius who was reposing in winter quarters at Sirmium, informing him (as he had already greatly feared) that the Sarmatian Limigantes, who [...] had expelled their masters from their hereditary homes, had learnt to despise the lands which had been generously allotted to them in the preceding year, in order to prevent so fickle a class from undertaking any mischievous enterprise, and had seized on the districts over the border; that they were straggling, according to their national custom, with great licence over the whole country, and would throw everything into disorder if they were not put down. The emperor, judging that any delay would increase their insolence, collected from all quarters a strong force of veteran soldiers, and before the spring was much advanced, set forth on an expedition against them, being urged to greater activity by two considerations; first, because the army, having acquired great booty during the last summer, was likely to be encouraged to successful exertion in the hope of similar reward; and secondly, because, as Anatolius was at that time prefect of Illyricum, everything necessary for such an expedition could be readily provided without recourse to any stringent measures. [...] The emperor set out [...] with a splendid staff, and reached Valeria [...] And having encamped his army on the banks of the Danube, he watched the movements of the barbarians, who, before his arrival, had been proposing, under friendly pretences, to enter Pannonia, meaning to lay it waste during the severity of the winter season, before the snow had been melted by the warmth of spring and the river had become passable, and while our people were unable from the cold to bear bivouacking in the open air. He at once therefore sent two tribunes, each accompanied by an interpreter, to the Limigantes, to inquire mildly why they had quitted the homes which at their own request had been assigned to them after the conclusion of the treaty of peace, and why they were now straggling in various directions, and passing their boundaries in contempt of his prohibitions. They made vain and frivolous excuses, fear compelling them to have recourse to lies, and implored the emperor's pardon, beseeching him to discard his displeasure, and to allow them to cross the river and come to him to explain the hardships under which they were labouring; alleging their willingness, if required, to retire to remoter lands, only within the Roman frontier, where, enjoying lasting peace and worshipping tranquillity as their tutelary deity, they would submit to the name and discharge the duties of tributary subjects. When the tribunes returned and related this, the emperor, exulting that an affair which appeared full of inextricable difficulties was likely to be brought to a conclusion without any trouble, and being eager to add to his acquisitions, admitted them all to his presence. His eagerness for acquiring territory was fanned by a swarm of flatterers, who were incessantly saying that when all distant districts were at peace, and when tranquillity was established everywhere, he would gain many subjects, and would be able to enlist powerful bodies of recruits, thereby relieving the provinces, which would often rather give money than personal service (though this expectation has more than once proved very mischievous to the state). Presently he pitched his camp near Acimincum, where a lofty mound was raised to serve for a tribune; and some boats, loaded with soldiers of the legions, without their baggage, under command of Innocentius, an engineer who had suggested the measure, were sent to watch the channel of the river, keeping close under the bank; so that, if they perceived the barbarians in disorder, they might come upon them and surprise their rear, while their attention was directed elsewhere. The Limigantes became aware of the measures thus promptly taken, but still employed no other means of defence than humility and entreaty; though secretly they cherished designs very different from those indicated by their words and gestures. But when they saw the emperor on his high mound preparing a mild harangue, and about to address them as men who would prove obedient in future, one of

them, seized with a sudden fury, hurled his shoe at the tribune, and cried out, »Marha, Marha!« which in their language is a signal of war; and a disorderly mob following him, suddenly raised their barbaric standard, and with fierce howls rushed upon the emperor himself. And when he, looking down from his high position, saw the whole place filled with thousands of men running to and fro, and their drawn swords and rapiers threatening him with immediate destruction, he descended, and mingling both with the barbarians and his own men, without any one perceiving him or knowing whether he was an officer or a common soldier; and since there was no time for delay or inaction, he mounted a speedy horse, and galloped away, and so escaped. But his few guards, while endeavouring to keep back the mutineers, who rushed on with the fierceness of fire, were all killed, either by wounds, or by being crushed beneath the weight of others who fell upon them; and the royal throne, with its golden cushion, was torn to pieces without any one making an effort to save it. But presently, when it became known that the emperor, after having been in the most imminent danger of his life, was still in peril, the army, feeling it to be the most important of all objects to assist him, for they did not yet think him safe, and confiding in their prowess, though from the suddenness of the attack they were only half formed, threw themselves, with loud and warlike cries upon the bands of the barbarians, fearlessly braving death. And because in their fiery valour our men were resolved to wipe out disgrace by glory, and were full of anger at the treachery of the foe, they slew every one whom they met without mercy, trampling all under foot, living, wounded, and dead alike; so that heaps of dead were piled up before their hands were weary of the slaughter. For the rebels were completely overwhelmed, some being slain, and others fleeing in fear, many of whom implored their lives with various entreaties, but were slaughtered with repeated wounds. And when, after they were all destroyed, the trumpets sounded a retreat, it was found that only a very few of our men were killed, and these had either been trampled down at first, or had perished from the insufficiency of their armour to resist the violence of the enemy. But the most glorious death was that of Cella, the tribune of the Scutarii, who at the beginning of the uproar set the example of plunging first into the middle of the Sarmatian host. After these blood-stained transactions, Constantius took what precautions prudence suggested for the security of his frontiers, and then returned to Sirmium, having avenged himself on the perfidity of his enemies [...] <sup>963</sup>.

The identification of the Limigantes' territory again depends on whether Ammianus' *Acimincum* is equated with Aquincum or Acumincum <sup>964</sup>. Ammianus' narrative has the emperor launching his campaign from the foreland of Valeria, suggesting that the land of the »servant Sarmatians« should be sought in the northerly part of the Hungarian Plain and that the events described by him took place somewhere in the Aquincum area. Another argument against an identification with Acumincum is that Constantius II had earlier evicted the vanquished Limigantes groups from this area and that the territory had been occupied by the Arcaragantes. Locating the Limigantes in the northern part of the Hungarian Plain is also supported by the Victoval neighbourhood, mentioned above. In this case, the western part of the Carpathian Basin's northern zone was occupied by the Quadi, whose eastern neighbours were the Limigantes and the Victovali. From a Sarmatian perspective, Valentinian's reign (364-375) was marked by the reinforcement of the defence system. This was the very last decade when Rome still played a leading role in the life of the barbarian peoples living on the Hungarian Plain. As we shall see below, power relations and their dynamics underwent a radical transformation after Valentinian's death and the appearance of the Huns in Europe.

<sup>963</sup> Ammian XIX.11.

<sup>964</sup> For an overview, see Barceló 1992.

## New Forms of Interaction Between Romans and Barbarians

*Owing to the bias of our sources, it is virtually impossible to see the Barbarians through their own lenses, to have recourse to the »Barbarian« interpretation and perspective on historical events. Only in rare, exceptional cases are we afforded, though indirectly, a slightly more detailed and somewhat reliable knowledge of the Barbarian point of view<sup>965</sup>.*

Relations between the Romans and the barbarians were gradually, but fundamentally transformed by the time of the Late Empire. Two main reasons can be cited: firstly, changes in the barbarian lands; and secondly, problems arising within the Roman Empire.

Viewing the issue from a barbarian perspective, the most important change was undoubtedly the situation arising after the evacuation of Dacia, which had especially grave repercussions across the entire Carpathian Basin. The Gothic migration and, later, the onslaught of the Huns, forced several barbarian peoples westward. For some time, the Romans were able to check them along their frontiers, although with increasing difficulty. This process is illustrated by a glance at the immense number of sites dating from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries on the Hungarian Plain. Not unlike a whirlpool, the Carpathian Basin sucked in the fugitives searching for new lands for whom there was no alternative but to launch ever more aggressive attacks against the *limes* and to negotiate their admittance into the Empire if they did not wish to become subjects of the dreaded Huns.

Viewed from the Empire's perspective, one of Rome's greatest difficulties was ensuring new recruits to the army. In other regions, especially in the Western Roman Empire, a solution had to be found for replenishing the population capable of farming the extensive, uncultivated fields.

One of the obvious reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire was its barbarisation. The Empire was, from the very beginning, open to admitting various peoples. The economical and political situation at the close of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century called for a thaw along the *limes* by forging alliances with the peoples living on the frontier's other side and allowing them to enter the Empire, which also ensured fresh recruits for the army and cheap labour for the estates<sup>966</sup>.

In fact, the admittance of the Sarmatians into the provinces of the Empire had begun much earlier. Hadrian had ordered the settlement of Rasparaganus, King (*rex*) of the Roxolani, and his people or a group of his people in the southern part of Istria<sup>967</sup>. Less than a century later, the Sarmatians »promptly furnished as their contribution to the alliance eight thousand cavalry, fifty-five hundred of whom he [Marcus] sent to Britain« (fig. 220, 3)<sup>968</sup>, in accordance with the terms of the peace treaty drawn up after the conclusion of the Marcomannic-Sarmatian wars.

However, settlement on a mass scale began later. There is a general consensus that *receptio* into Pannonia began around the 270s<sup>969</sup>. Even though the written sources did not expressly mention Sarmatians among the peoples permitted to settle in Pannonia, it has been suggested that some Sarmatians were also granted a new home in the province. During Diocletian's reign:

They conducted several wars [...] subduing the Carpi and Bastarnae, and defeating the Sarmatians, from which nations he settled a great number of captives in the Roman territories<sup>970</sup>.

<sup>965</sup> Várady 1961, 121.

<sup>966</sup> There is a voluminous literature on the settling of various peoples, e.g. Várady 1969. – Kiss 1993. See Kiss 2008, for a detailed overview with the relevant literature. The 4<sup>th</sup> century settlements have been discussed in detail by Mirković 1993.

<sup>967</sup> Alföldi 1940a, 45. – Mócsy 1974, 100 n. 74. – Vaday 1977.

<sup>968</sup> Dio LXXI.16.

<sup>969</sup> Mócsy 1990.

<sup>970</sup> Eutrop. IX.25.1. On the same event, see Orosius *Adv.Pag.* VII.25.11-13. Cf. Nagy 1954, 512-516. – Kiss 2008, 4.

In this case, the problem is where the frontier section in question, with its »great number« of Sarmatians, should be sought. The archaeological record does not reflect a mass settlement of Sarmatians on Roman soil. Elaborating on Harmatta's idea that Constantine and Maximian transplanted the Sarmatians to areas near *limes* forts, M. Kiss called attention to the expression »disperse« (*dispersere*) in Orosius' report, which in her view indicated that the Sarmatians had not been settled as one group, but had been broken up into smaller ones and settled near the forts, and were only allowed to perform military service after they had given evidence of their reliability. It is hardly mere chance that they are described as captives (*captivi*) in the text. However, the argument for this theory, namely, that the Sarmatian finds known from »Transdanubia have principally been recovered from the area of *limes* installations«, is not borne out by the archaeological record<sup>971</sup>.

The barbarians of the Hungarian Plain were rarely settled in Pannonia; they were usually directed farther west<sup>972</sup>. We know about a Sarmatian presence in Moesia after 333 from a »guidebook« known as the *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum*, where it was recorded that there was a Sarmatian way station for changing horses (*mutatio Sarmatae*) that, on the basis of the itinerary's precise specifications, was located in Paraćin in the Morava Valley (about half-way between Belgrade and Niš). This group was apparently settled there as a homogenous unit under Constantine<sup>973</sup>. In 334, during Constantine's reign, there was a mass settlement of peoples on Roman soil: »[...] Constantine [...] distributed more than three hundred thousand people of different ages and both sexes through Thrace, Scythia, Macedonia, and Italy«<sup>974</sup>. While the numbers are probably exaggerated, they do indicate that a large multitude of people was involved<sup>975</sup>. The sources suggest that huge masses remained in the Danube Valley despite the large-scale re-settlements<sup>976</sup>, and the number of finds also culminates in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> century.

The fact that a major Sarmatian contingent was transplanted to Roman territory can be gleaned from the lists in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, an official listing of Roman civil and military posts drawn up in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century, which mentions fifteen prefects of the *Sarmatae gentiles* in Italy and six in Gaul, suggesting the settlement of a huge mass of barbarians, probably as a homogenous group judging from their location in the Empire. Some were undoubtedly transferred to their new homeland together with their families in 334<sup>977</sup>. The fragmentary *Notitia Dignitatum* lists settlements of the *sarmatae gentiles* in the Po region, southern Italy, Gallia Lugdunensis and in the Belgica I-II *civitas*<sup>978</sup>. Ausonius reported a Sarmatian settlement near Treviri<sup>979</sup>. The fact that the data contained in the *Notitia* and Ausonius' passage do not overlap but complement each other suggests that further Sarmatian settlements had been founded in other distant provinces as well<sup>980</sup>.

<sup>971</sup> Harmatta 1971, 265. – M. Kiss 1994, 253-254; 2008, 4. – Orosius *Adv. Pag.* VII.25.11-13: »postea per eosdem duces strenue adversus Carpos Basternasque pugnatum est. Sarmatas deinde vicerunt: quorum copiosissimam captivam multitudinem per Romanorum finium dispersere praesidia« (»Later these same generals fought vigorously against the Carpi and the Basternae. They then conquered the Sarmatians and distributed a great number of captives from this people among the garrisons of the Roman frontiers«).

<sup>972</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 683. – Barkóczy 1959. – Mócsy 1962, 573. 576.

<sup>973</sup> *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 565. The text was first published by Parthey/Pinder 1848, 423, who were also the first to identify the location.

<sup>974</sup> *Excerpta Valesiana* VI.32. »The Limigantes Sarmatians, having gathered a force, expelled their masters, who are now called the Argaragantes, onto Roman soil« (Hieron. *Chron.* ad. a. 334). »The expelled Sarmatians found that their only hope of safety was in Constantine's protection: and he [...] received

them all within the confines of the Roman empire« (Euseb. *vita Const.* IV.6).

<sup>975</sup> Some scholars, such as Nagy 1954, 515, accepted the figure of 300,000 at face value, while others quite correctly noted that only a fraction of this number is plausible, noting that the number of re-settled Sarmatians (including their families) could hardly have exceeded 100,000. It has also been suggested that a part of this population was re-settled in the Danube Valley by the Romans in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century where they lived under a Roman protectorate (Barkóczy 1959, 444; Várady 1961, 37).

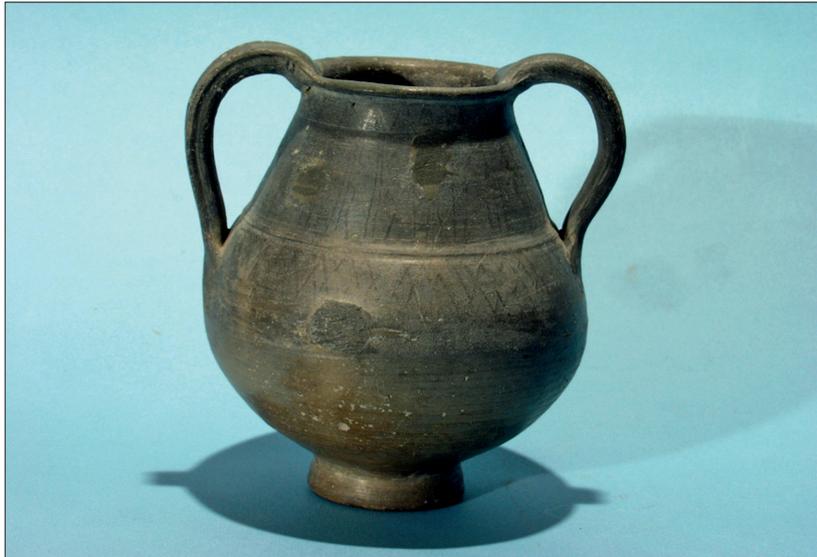
<sup>976</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus' description of the Sarmatian civil war in 358/359 (Ammian XVII.12-13) suggests a sizable population.

<sup>977</sup> Alföldi 1924/1926, vol. II, 5-7. – Barkóczy 1959. – Várady 1961, 37.

<sup>978</sup> *Not. Dign. Occ.* XLII.

<sup>979</sup> Auson. *Mosella* 9.

<sup>980</sup> Barkóczy 1959, 446.



**Fig. 272** Researchers tended to connect early group of the pottery with smoothed decoration to immigrating Barbarians (recently to the Carpi). A stray vessel dated to the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century found in Aquincum probably can be included into this group. – (After Tóth 2011, 300 pl. 4, 2).

The situation on the Lower Danube turned critical with the advance of the Huns. One consequence of their onslaught was that a mixed group of Goths, Alans and Huns led by Alatheus and Saphrac was settled on Roman soil around 380<sup>981</sup>.

In addition to mass settlement, there was also some infiltration in the frontier areas. This is reflected by the occasional barbarian finds such as pottery with smoothed decoration, bone combs, and the like, appearing in the provincial material (**fig. 272**). However, none of the finds in question can be expressly linked to the Sarmatians, nor has a closer scrutiny of the burial rites practised in Pannonia yielded a positive result. Although the appearance of niche graves has been associated with the presence of barbarians (Sarmatians), more recent studies have shown that despite their uncommonness in the province, these graves, documented from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries onward, did not contain any grave goods diverging from the usual provincial assemblages. These graves are usually west to east orientated, and thus differ from the south to north alignment of Sarmatian burials. Moreover, niches were not recessed into the graves of the Hungarian Plain during the Roman period and the closest Sarmatian group among whom this practice can be documented at this time lived in the Pontic<sup>982</sup>.

Aside from the issue of the re-settled and infiltrating Sarmatians, we should also examine whether some Sarmatian groups on the Hungarian Plain had contributed warriors to the Roman military as auxiliaries, who returned to their homeland after deployment in battle, a practice often followed by the Goths<sup>983</sup>. Although there is no direct evidence to support this, the Sarmatians probably acted in the same manner in light of their earlier history.

The new dimensions of relations between Rome and the barbarians are reflected by 4<sup>th</sup> century coin circulation. As mentioned above, in Transylvania, for example, coin circulation declined under Philipp the Arab following the Carpic incursions and only commenced again in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Roman small change made an

<sup>981</sup> Várady 1969, 22-24. – Mócsy 1974, 340-345. – Kovács 2004, 131-139, for a critical review of the sources.

<sup>982</sup> Prohászka 2005/2006, 96-101. The reason for the appearance of the few niche graves, especially in the Intercisa and Keszthely area, calls for further research.

<sup>983</sup> Várady 1961, 39-40. – Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 45 n. 134, with further literature.

appearance among the barbarians of eastern Hungary from the reign of Constantine onward (e. g. Valentinian's coins found at Öcsöd)<sup>984</sup>. The massive outflow of Roman coins suggests a new type of relation, namely, the recruitment of soldiers from among the barbarians. In Alföldi's opinion:

There began a natural mingling which would have unnoticeably eliminated the differences between the lifeways of Rome and her old neighbours had not the Hunnic onslaught shattered this development<sup>985</sup>.

At this point, we should address the question of the legal status of the Sarmatians re-settling or already re-settled in the Empire. After Mommsen, several scholars have dealt with the legal status of the *foederati*, the *laeti* and of the *gentiles*. Detailed discussion of the problem could not be encompassed within the present work, so we will concentrate on the specific situation of the Sarmatians.

At the beginning, the Romans considered the migrants to be *peregrini deditici*, that is to say, they did not receive Roman citizenship immediately. They rarely swelled the ranks of town dwellers, but generally replaced the declining rural population as *coloni* on estates. They were taxed from the very beginning and they were also registered as new recruits<sup>986</sup>. The Sarmatians of the Carpathian Basin were excellent candidates because they had been engaged in active farming for several hundred years on the Hungarian Plain.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Sarmatians were generally described as *gentiles* within the semi-feudal military *laetus* status<sup>987</sup>. One of Valentinian's edicts, strictly forbidding marriage between the *gentiles* and the provincial population<sup>988</sup>, is a good reflection of their status. The prohibition against marriage probably served a dual purpose: it was designed to isolate the barbarians from the Christian population and it also ensured a continuous stream of recruits to the army by drawing from the traditional corps in a particular community<sup>989</sup>. This was especially important in the case of specialist units, such as the *cataphractarii* (figs 110. 121. 171. 220). The equipment used by these heavily armoured cavalrymen and their horses called for an endurance beyond that of the average soldier, not to speak of the tactics employed by these troops that similarly called for special training. Irrespective of whether or not the prohibition achieved its goal, the very fact that the decree was issued indicates an existing and widespread practice<sup>990</sup>. The demand on the *laeti* to provide troops resembled the obligations of the other soldier families; they differed from the other Roman troops solely regarding their ethnic background and weaponry<sup>991</sup>.

Although there can be no doubt that the *sarmatae gentiles* were mounted soldiers, the *Notitia Dignitatum* suggests that they were subordinate to the *Praepositura Magistri Peditum*, the prefecture of the supreme commanders of infantry troops from the turn of the century<sup>992</sup>.

An old problem bedevilling provincial archaeology is whether the artefactual finds and/or the burial rite enable the identification of groups who had been settled on Roman soil<sup>993</sup>. The most recent and convincing studies in this respect were conducted by Tóth, who identified a group of Carpi transplanted to the province based on the presence of late 3<sup>rd</sup> century cremation burials and the parallels to the grave goods, as well as

<sup>984</sup> For 4<sup>th</sup> century coin circulation, see Lányi 1990, 213-214. For the Öcsöd hoard, see Jónás 1929/1930.

<sup>985</sup> Alföldi 1943b, 18.

<sup>986</sup> The settlement in rural areas was mentioned by Radnóti 1954, 497. For a more detailed discussion, see Kiss 2008, 2, with further literature.

<sup>987</sup> Várady 1961, 36-37; 1969, 175-176. – Harmatta 1971, 265.

<sup>988</sup> »Nulli provincialium, cuiuscumque ordinis aut loci fuerit, cum barbara sit uxore coniugium, nec ulli gentilium provincialis

femina copuletur. Quod si quae inter provinciales atque gentiles adfinitates ex huiusmodi nuptiis exstiterint, quod in his suspectum vel noxium detegitur, capitaliter expietur« (CTh. 3.14.1).

<sup>989</sup> Várady 1961, 37-38.

<sup>990</sup> Demandt 1989, 76-78.

<sup>991</sup> Várady 1961, 36.

<sup>992</sup> Not.Dign. Occ. XLII.

<sup>993</sup> For an overview of the many problems involved, see Kiss 2008, 3.



**Fig. 273** Finds believed to reflect a Sarmatian presence in Pannonia: **1-6** vessels from Intercisa (after Póczy 1957, figs 49. 119 pl. XX, 3. 6-7. 12. 17). – **7-9** Egyptian statuettes from the Szekszárd area (after Lakatos 1960, figs 5. 7-8).

the topographic location of the sites in south-eastern Transdanubia and the scattered references in various literary works<sup>994</sup>.

It has not proven possible to securely identify any provincial group with the Sarmatians, despite the many attempts to demonstrate their presence in the western half of the Carpathian Basin through 4<sup>th</sup> century find assemblages (fig. 273)<sup>995</sup>. Nagy believed that the cemeteries of the so-called Zengővárkony group had been used by barbarians from the Hungarian Plain whom he identified with a Vandalian-Alanian population that had been re-settled from the Körös-Tisza-Maros region by Constantine the Great in the wake of the Gothic attack<sup>996</sup>. On the strength of the analogies to the pottery with smoothed decoration from Lussonium, and especially the parallels to a top-handled vessel (fig. 274), Kiss suggested the possible presence of Sarmatians from the Hungarian Plain in the fort's area, arriving before 375<sup>997</sup>.

Tóth noted the formal and technical similarities between the box brooches (*Dosenfibel*), a popular and widespread type among the Sarmatians probably crafted by their own goldsmiths, and the disc brooches of the Keszthely culture that flourished in the 6<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 275). However, it has not yet been possible to bridge the chronological gap between the Sarmatians of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the Keszthely culture, or the geographic distance between the distribution of the two. In other words, even if there is some meaningful relation between the two brooch types, the link between them is currently missing because we have no idea where the craftsmen producing brooches of this type worked during the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>998</sup>.

The first architectural period of the so-called inner forts and construction of town walls at Scarbantia, Gorsium and Sopianae are usually dated to the military reforms introduced by Diocletian and Constantine, namely the creation of border (*limitanei*) and mobile troops and their garrisoning in the Empire's provinces. Kiss assumed that the settled Sarmatians had also been employed in the construction of these forts, claiming that »it is not mere chance that the archaeological finds of these barbarians are found in the border forts and in the inner forts in question«<sup>999</sup>. It must therefore be emphasised that there is no reliable archaeological evidence for the settlement of Sarmatians in Pannonia and that the association of various artefacts with the Sarmatians is not convincing on the whole.

### The So-Called Alföld Ramparts (fig. 276)

The assessment of the Csörsz or Devil's Dyke is perhaps one of the most controversial issues among researchers of the Barbaricum of the Roman Age. The interpretation of its function is pivotal to any discussion of relations between the Romans and the Sarmatians, especially regarding the events of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>994</sup> Tóth 2005b; 2009, 100-106. While Tóth's ethnic attribution of the cremation burials is wholly convincing, the ethnic attribution of the finds (such as Dacian cups, mirrors described as nomadic – properly, mirror pendants, see Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003a – and vessels with smoothed decoration) to the Carpi is uncertain and unconvincing.

<sup>995</sup> Kiss 2008, 20 n. 45. The presence of Sarmatian groups has been assumed at Fenékpuszta, in the Szekszárd area, at Somogyzil, in the cemeteries at Brigetio and Szentendre, and at Dunaújváros. Mráv 2006, 43. 48, has since demonstrated that the Somogyzil grave contained the burial of a Roman auxiliary soldier whose ring-pommel sword was not a Sarmatian weapon. The Egyptian statuettes from the Szekszárd area, linked to the Sarmatians by Lakatos 1960, can indeed reflect a possible Sarmatian presence. Various articles, such as the enamel brooch with a chequerboard pattern

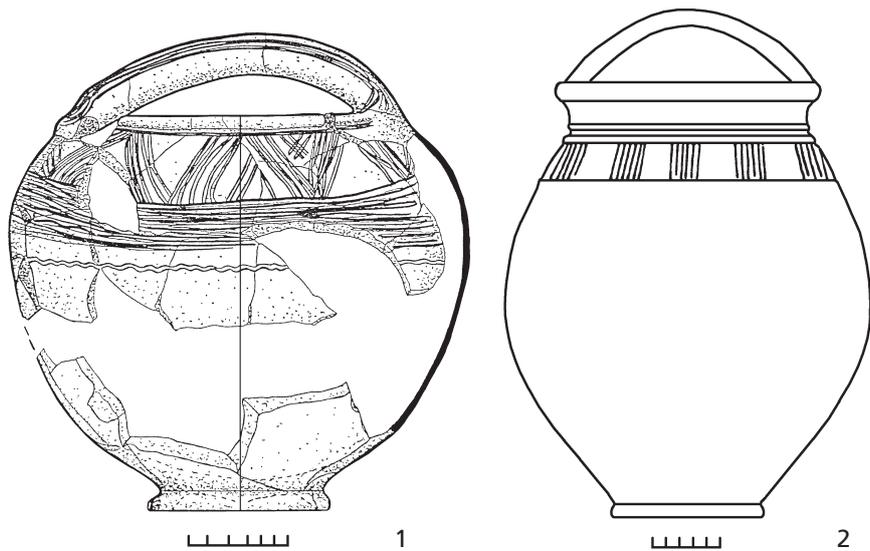
and costume adornments such as the large bead decorating a belt end from the 4<sup>th</sup> century cemetery at Szentendre-Castra Constantia, can perhaps be taken as an indication of the Sarmatians (Topál 1997, 539). A group of vessels from Intercisa identified as wares of Sarmatian character by Póczy 1957, 77-85, does indeed recall ceramic types from the Hungarian Plain, although it still remains to be established whether their occurrence reflects the actual presence of barbarians. At the same time, the mirror pendant with tamga signs from Intercisa can be regarded as a new eastern element (fig. 191, 1) (Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2003a).

<sup>996</sup> Nagy 1993, 183-184; Mihály Nagy 1997, 156.

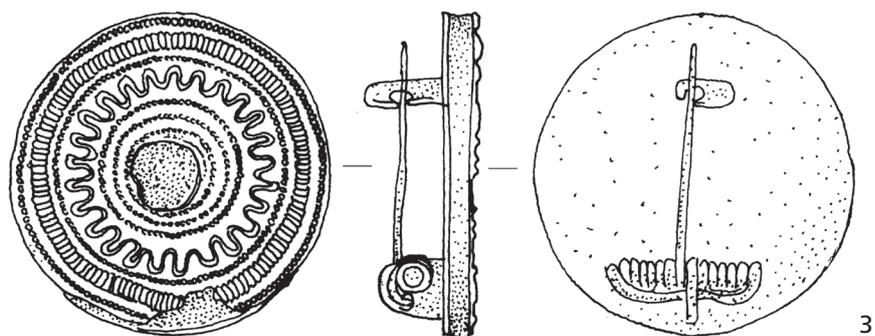
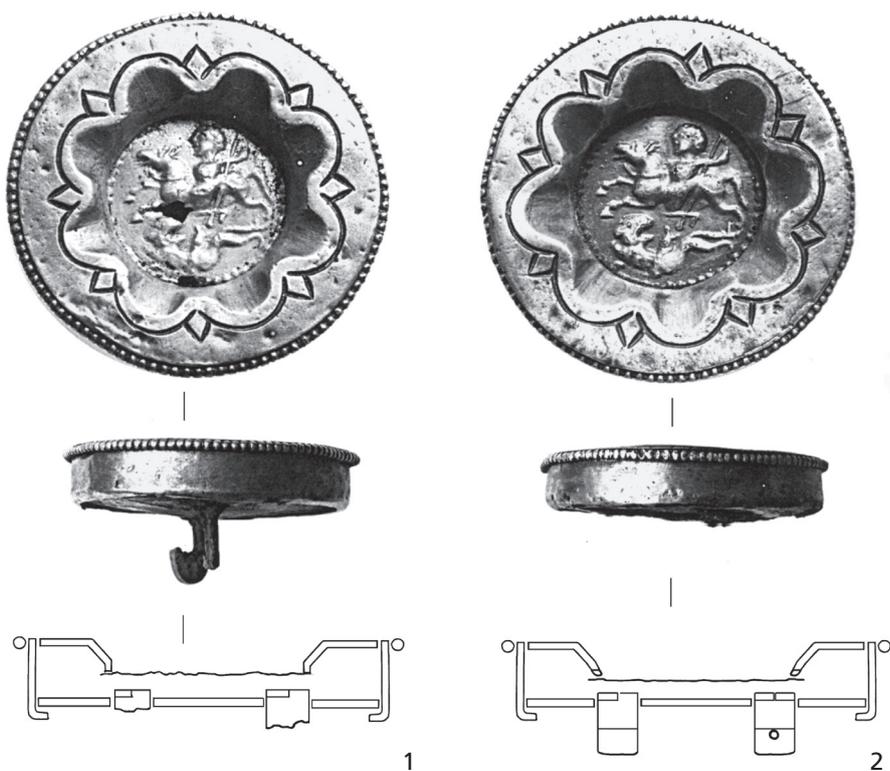
<sup>997</sup> Kiss 1993; M. Kiss 1994, 253-254.

<sup>998</sup> Tóth 2005a, 188-189 fig. 8, 10.

<sup>999</sup> Kiss 2008, 9.



**Fig. 274** 1 top handled vessel with smoothed decoration from Lussonium (after Kiss 1992, pl. II). – 2 a remotely similar Sarmatian analogy from Tiszaföldvár-Téglagyár (Brick factory) (after Vaday 1994, pl. III, 35).



**Fig. 275** 1-2 disc brooches of the Keszthely culture from the 6<sup>th</sup> century (after Tóth 2005a, figs 1-3). – 3 Sarmatian box brooch (*Dosenfibel*) from Törökszentmiklós-Surján-Újtelep (after Vaday 1985a, fig. 8, 2).

A more detailed discussion of this monument therefore seems in order. We shall first describe the different ramparts and then turn to the problems of interpretation.

Although the systematic investigation of the ramparts only began in the 1960s, this monumental earthen structure had piqued the interest of archaeologists from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, beginning notably with Rómer, Frölich and Pulszky<sup>1000</sup>. The crucial role of the interpretation of the dyke's function in Roman studies is amply illustrated by the proliferation of articles devoted to the Csörsz Dyke and the fact that a compendium of studies on the dyke, originally published in 1983, was republished on the occasion of the 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies held in Pécs in 2003<sup>1001</sup>.

The sources on the Csörsz or Devil's Dyke were first collected and published by Rómer (**fig. 277**)<sup>1002</sup>. The earliest reference can be found in a charter issued by King Béla IV in 1267, confirming the 1067 foundation charter of the Százd monastery. The text mentioned an »immense ditch«, which has justifiably been identified with the Csörsz Dyke. The monument is described in Székely's *Magyar krónika* [Hungarian chronicle] from 1558 where it appears as *Csersz árokja* [Csersz Dyke] in the passage relating the events of 718:

Seita was the king of Pannonia. He fought over the Csersz Dyke, which had been named Csersz Dyke not because King Csersz had brought a wife for himself on it, but because the dyke had been constructed by him for the realm's protection well before the age of Attila, when many nations inhabited the land. The dyke was deep, like now the moats around the towns, and blooming trees were planted atop it, whose roots moored the rampart to prevent its collapse. It had gates and sentries. When the enemy attacked the country, they all hastened to the dyke and defended the land. There is not merely one in those parts, but many more, all between the Tisza and the Danube, which can be seen up to this very day, but have since long been infilled, for they were used not by the Hungarians, but by the nations before them<sup>1003</sup>.

The Csörsz Dyke is an elaborate earthwork system made up of a double or triple ditch (at some place quadruple) and rampart. The roughly 60,000 km<sup>2</sup> large area enclosed by the dyke is bounded by the Danube in the west and south. The earthwork starts at Dunakeszi above Budapest and extends eastward to Ároktő, turning sharply south after crossing the Tisza before Újfehértó and running south to rejoin the Danube at Viminacium (Kostolac, Serbia). Its full length is about 520-550 km. Several lines, often as many as four, can be noted in some areas. The multiple rampart sections add up to some 1260 km, based on the data gathered during the systematic field surveys begun in the 1960s. The ramparts face the Hungarian Plain and were evidently designed to protect the population behind the ramparts from attacks coming from the east and north. The 2-4 m deep and 5-9 m wide ditches run north or east of the ramparts. The calculated sizes are the following: the 7-10 m wide ramparts were raised to a height of 2.5-3.5 m. An estimated 10-15 million m<sup>3</sup> of earth was moved during the construction of the earthwork, involving the labour of 83,300 people for a whole year, assuming five days of construction work per week (**figs 278-279**)<sup>1004</sup>.

In addition to the main, so-called longitudinal line of the earthworks, there was a series of inner ramparts<sup>1005</sup>, which can now be found in the Bačka region, the southerly part of the Danube-Tisza interfluvium in Serbia. Little research has been done on these earthworks and it is unclear whether there was any relation between the Csörsz Dyke and these inner earthworks known as the »Roman« ramparts. One line of these

<sup>1000</sup> Rómer 1878, 39-77. – Frölich 1887. – Pulszky 1891.

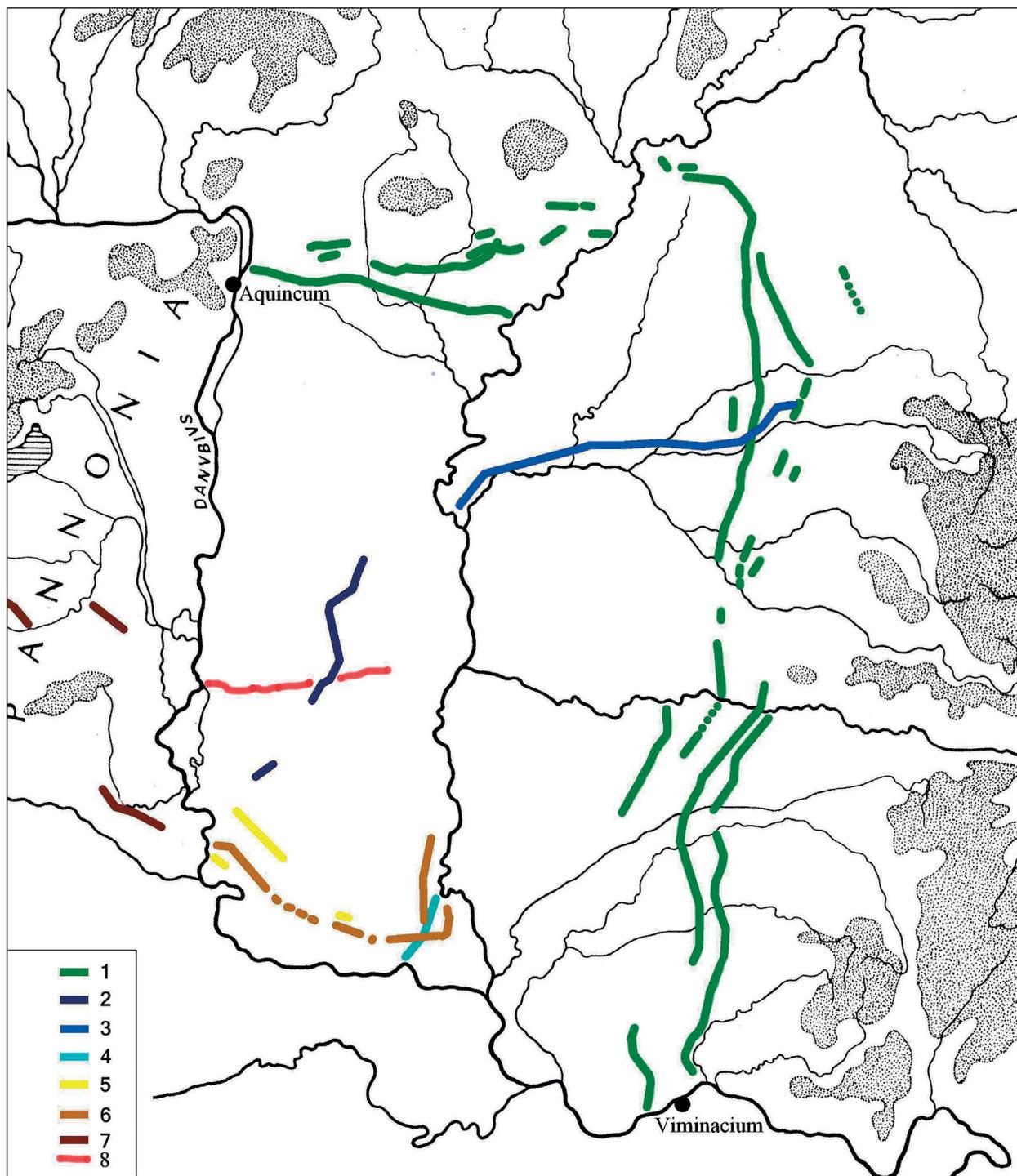
<sup>1001</sup> Garam/Patay/Soproni 1983; 2003.

<sup>1002</sup> Rómer 1878, 39-77 map between pp. 42 and 43. – Balás 1961, 331.

<sup>1003</sup> Székely 1854, VII. 6.

<sup>1004</sup> Patay 1969, 111. – Garam/Patay/Soproni 1983, 13-17.

<sup>1005</sup> Rómer 1878, map between pp. 42 and 43. – Frölich 1887, 21. – Gubitza n.y., 11-13.



**Fig. 276** The so-called Alföld ramparts: **1** Csörsz or Devil's Dyke. – **2** Kiskunság rampart. – **3** ramparts along the Körös. – **4** the so-called Greater Roman Rampart. – **5** ramparts in the area of the Lesser Roman Rampart. – **6** the so-called Lesser Roman Rampart. – **7** ramparts in Transdanubia, on Roman territory. – **8** the assumed Roman road in the northern Bácska region. – (Map E. Istvánovits/V. Kulcsár).





**Fig. 278** Section of the Csörsz Dyke at Valkó (County Pest). – (Photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).



**Fig. 279** Reconstruction of the Csörsz Dyke at Debrecen-Fancsika designed by P. Patay. – (Photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

inner ramparts is marked as the »Lesser Roman Rampart« on the Military Survey Maps drawn up under Emperor Joseph II in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; another line appears as the »Greater Roman Rampart« (fig. 276, 5-6)<sup>1006</sup>.

The so-called Lesser Roman Rampart ran east-south-eastward from Apatin toward Gospođinci where it turned north and continued to Čurug, running parallel to the Tisza. To its west, another rampart extended parallel to it, stretching from Gospođinci to the Tisza. Its height still ranged between 3 and 10 m in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, its width varied between 16 and 20 m at the base and between 4 and 8 m at the top. The ditch(es) flanking the rampart could also be identified. The ditch ran by the rampart's northern side along the Apatin section. Another section had two ditches flanking the rampart, while at Kisač, the ditch extended along the rampart's southern side. The base of the earthwork was 20-25 m wide together with the ditch. The first section could be traced for a length of 65 km on maps and in the field, although its original length must have been around 100 km, considering the missing, probably destroyed sections. The rampart's north-

<sup>1006</sup> Dudás 1885, used the adjectives »greater« and »lesser« in exactly the opposite way. The reason for this was probably that the longer rampart was lower, while the shorter one was higher and wider.



**Fig. 280** Section of the Kiskunság ramparts in the 1960-1970s, east of the farmstead at Kiskunhalas-Alsószállás-dűlő. – (After Patay 2006, fig. 10).

ern, independent section had a similar structure. Its length amounted to 29 km and its ditch faced eastward. At some places there were breaks in the continuity of the earthwork. Its line was not straight, but meandering<sup>1006a</sup>. According to Kálmán Gubitza's description, several sections of other ramparts survived in various areas of the Bačka region: a shorter part on the outskirts of Ravno Selo, another between Apatin and Sonta, and a third running from Svetozar Miletić through Čonoplja and Kljajićevo to Crvenka. The structure of these ramparts resembled that of the »Lesser Roman Rampart«<sup>1007</sup>.

The so-called Greater Roman Rampart ran north-north-eastward from Novi Sad and crossed the »Lesser Roman Rampart« north of Gospođinci, whence it continued to the Tisza where it ended. A ditch flanks the western side along its entire length. Frölich measured the rampart at two locations, recording that the eastern descent was 5.3-9.5 m long, while the western one was 9-13 m. The ditch was 8.6-10.3 m wide, the width of the rampart on its top was 1.3-5 m<sup>1008</sup>.

Additional rampart sections have been identified in the Danube-Tisza interfluvium north of the Bačka ramparts. Field surveys and the data contained in old maps both confirm the existence of an earthwork running north-east to south-west in the Kiskunhalas area (figs 276, 2; 280). The ditch extends in front of the rampart and faces the south-east, while the rampart faces the north-west, suggesting that – if they served as a defence system – hostile attacks were expected from the south. The ditch of Kiskunság (Cumania Minor) – an historical region in the middle part of the Danube-Tisza interfluvium – was considerably smaller than the ones in the Bačka region or the ditch of the Csörsz Dyke. The north-eastern end of this rampart lay some 30-35 km from the mouth of the Körös rivers, where another similar earthwork ran towards the east along the Triple Körös and the northern bank of the Sebes (Rapid) Körös to Transylvania, crossing the inner line of the Csörsz Dyke at Körösszegapáti (fig. 276, 3). However, its chronology relative to the Csörsz Dyke remains unclear. The surveys in the 1970s reported that the ditch running parallel to the Körös was as wide as 5.5 m and as deep as 2.65 m in some areas<sup>1009</sup>.

<sup>1006a</sup> For the dimensions and the structure of the ramparts, see Frölich 1887, 22-24. 28-29. 210. 307.

<sup>1007</sup> Gubitza n. y., 11-13, essentially based on Cziráky's research.

<sup>1008</sup> For the dimensions and the structure of the ramparts, see Frölich 1887, 133. 138.

<sup>1009</sup> Rómer 1878, map between pp. 42 and 43. – Soproni 2003, 59 n. 119. For more recent surveys of the Kiskunság rampart, see Gallina 1999a. – Patay 2005; 2006, all with the earlier literature.

At the end of the 1970s, the research group led by Patay that investigated the Csörsz Dyke, mapped the remains of an earthwork running in the direction of Baja area (fig. 276, 8). This rampart was assumed to extend west to east toward Szeged, and thus had no apparent association with the one along the Körös. Flanked by a ditch on either side, the rampart recalled the structure of the »Lesser Roman Rampart« in the Bačka region. Although the rampart was cut through, its age could not be determined. It was interpreted as a Roman Age road despite the chronological uncertainties<sup>1010</sup>.

Several other ramparts have been identified in various locations across the Carpathian Basin. Among them we should mention the one recently investigated by Matei and Gindele, who cut through a rampart and ditch at several points, near Supuru de Sus, some 50 km from the Porolissum *limes*. In Matei's view, the ditches running across the valleys of the Kraszna and Zalau rivers were constructed by the Romans. Although heavily disturbed by agricultural work, the ditches survived to a depth of 2-2.5 m and a width of 3-4.5 m<sup>1011</sup>.

It has been suggested that the »Lesser Roman Rampart« (fig. 276, 6) had a continuation in Transdanubia (fig. 276, 7). This conclusion was reached on the basis of similar rampart remains found, for example, in the counties of Tolna, Vas and Somogy<sup>1012</sup>.

Comparable earthworks have also been reported from southern Slovakia and Transylvania<sup>1013</sup>. There are several ramparts in the wider region: the one extending for some 300 km in the Lower Danube region, known as Brazda lui Novac, or the Devil's Dyke<sup>1014</sup>, in the Dniester-Prut interfluvium, as well as in the region between the Pontic and the Marica, where the Erkesija rampart lies. The combined length of the latter and the rampart in Bessarabia is roughly 140 km<sup>1015</sup>.

The current evidence does not support the claim that these ramparts, including the so-called longitudinal ramparts, were built according to a uniform concept or that they were roughly contemporaneous. One feature shared by all is that they delimit plainland areas. At the same time, one must obviously examine each earthwork separately to determine its date and function. Three explanations are usually proposed for the purpose of these earthworks: 1) an embankment for flood protection; 2) a road; or, 3) a structure for marking and/or defending a border.

When addressing the question of the ramparts' chronology, we must obviously consider the archaeological evidence, the structure of the earthwork, the area it traverses or encompasses and the written sources on the period. From our point of view, the key issue is whether any of the ramparts were constructed during the Roman Age. The ramparts are traditionally dated to the Roman Age by most scholars. Insofar as this dating is correct, the next question is whether the earthworks were planned and built by the Romans or the barbarians. It must immediately be noted that one major counter-argument for Roman technical involvement in the construction of the ramparts is that not one single fortification of the type customarily found along the *limes* has been identified along these ramparts<sup>1016</sup>.

<sup>1010</sup> Patay 2005.

<sup>1011</sup> Matei/Gindele 2004; 2009. In their view, this *limes* section can be associated with the rampart in the Körös Valley, whose ditch lay north of the rampart (in contrast to Gallina 1999a, 74, who wrote about a south-eastern ditch), meaning that it protected the area from the north. In their view, it marked the boundary of Decebal's kingdom and after his victory Trajan established the earliest *limes* (which was later abandoned) in this location. This is contradicted by the fact that the section cut through the earthwork at the junction of the Körös Valley rampart and the Csörsz Dyke (which cannot be dated before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century) revealed that the Csörsz Dyke was the earlier of the two (Soproni 1978, 118).

<sup>1012</sup> Römer 1878, map between pp. 42 and 43. – Frölich 1887, 22. – Gallina 1999a, 69.

<sup>1013</sup> Dénes 2001/2007. – Beljak/Pažinová 2012.

<sup>1014</sup> This rampart extends from Ploiești to the River Ialomița and can be traced further towards the Siret.

<sup>1015</sup> For an excellent overview of these ramparts, see Fiedler 1986, with further literature.

<sup>1016</sup> Early descriptions of the ramparts in the Bačka region note that these earthworks appear to have connected earthen forts. However, this possibility has not been systematically researched since Cziráky's studies. Cziráky dated the earthen forts in question to the Late Migration period (Gubitz n. y., 12-13).

## The Csörsz or Devil's Dyke (figs 276, 1; 278-279)

There is a general consensus that the Csörsz Dyke can be dated to the Roman Age. In fact, this is the most widely accepted date for all the ramparts described above because most scholars believe that only the Romans were capable of organising construction work on such a scale in the region<sup>1017</sup>. However, the lack of watchtowers and camps is a serious caveat.

Of all the earthworks (the so-called longitudinal ramparts) of the Hungarian Plain, the Csörsz Dyke is the one that has been investigated most thoroughly and systematically. Using the data from maps and historical sources compiled by Balás, the research group led by Patay conducted a systematic survey of the ramparts beginning in 1962 and bisecting the earthwork in several locations<sup>1018</sup>. The main evidence for dating the earthwork came from the excavations. The *terminus post quem* of the *vallum* and *fossa* system was provided by the *terra sigillata*, painted Roman pottery sherds and brooches recovered from the fill of various archaeological features, which suggested a construction date after the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century<sup>1019</sup>.

The *ante quem* is the 11<sup>th</sup> century: the investigations at Oszlár brought to light graves dated by the coins of Hungarian King Salamon which had been dug into the *vallum*<sup>1020</sup>. This date is also confirmed by a written source, the already cited foundation charter of the Százd monastery, in which the Csörsz Dyke is mentioned<sup>1021</sup>.

Two sections of the rampart in the Maros/Mureş region in Romania were cut through near Sîmbăteni and Covăsniţ in 1966. Although a rather eroded section of the earthwork was excavated in both locations, the remains of five ditches could nonetheless be registered at the latter site. The layer of pottery sherds dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD found under the widest rampart (marked D) can be regarded as a *terminus post quem* for this section of the Csörsz Dyke<sup>1022</sup>.

One intriguing question in the light of the archaeological evidence is whether the earthwork system can be regarded as a uniformly conceived structure. There can be no doubt that the main line of the ditch and rampart system known as the Csörsz Dyke was constructed according to a uniform concept. However, the chronological position of the double and, in some areas, triple lines relative to each other is highly controversial. The possible chronological gaps between the rampart sections crossing each other still remain to be clarified. Another difficulty is posed by the fact that, at present, only some sections of the ramparts can be surveyed and mapped. In many places, the line of the rampart can at the most be reconstructed from old maps, aerial photos and excavations<sup>1023</sup>. In the Nyírség region, for example, an outer line could be reconstructed from the toponyms and the data recorded in old maps<sup>1024</sup>.

Returning to the chronological issues, the main consideration in dating the earthworks was theoretical and principally based on the identification of an ethnic and/or cultural group living in the region between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD whose settlement territory was bounded by the Csörsz Dyke. There are three archaeological cultures on the Hungarian Plain whose distribution more or less coincided with the area in question: the Sarmatians, the Gepids and the Early Avars. The most accepted dating of the earthwork is to the Roman Age and there is also a general consensus that the construction of the dyke would hardly have made sense from strategic point of view before the evacuation of Dacia, regardless of whether it had been

1017 Fiedler 1986, 458, with further literature.

1018 Balás 1961; 1963. – Garam/Patay/Soproni 1983; 2003.

1019 Garam/Patay/Soproni 2003, 49-56.

1020 Soproni 1978, 113 n. 9. – Garam/Patay/Soproni 1983, 52; 2003, 53.

1021 Balás 1961, 331.

1022 For a detailed description and discussion, see Horedt 1968.

1023 One case in point is a section of the Csörsz Dyke, no longer visible to the naked eye, identified on the outskirts of Dunakeszi during the salvage excavations preceding the construction of Road 2/A (Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2002).

1024 Istvánovits/Kulcsár 2000, 248.

raised by the Romans or the Sarmatians. Conversely, a defence work on this scale would have served the interest of both the Empire and the population of the Hungarian Plain following the Goths' occupation of Transylvania<sup>1025</sup>. Assuming a Roman contribution to the construction work, the question arises to what extent the lands of the barbarians bordering on the *limes* were autonomous, at least in Roman eyes<sup>1026</sup>. Several theories have been advanced regarding the period after 271, with scholarly opinion mostly divided between two major interpretations<sup>1027</sup>.

The first was proposed by Mócsy, according to whom the Csörsz Dyke was raised as part of the military construction work under Galerius and Diocletian in 294<sup>1028</sup>. The weak point of this assertion is that the earthwork could hardly have been constructed without the Sarmatians' consent and their active participation. However, the Sarmatians repeatedly raided the Empire exactly during Diocletian's reign.

The second was put forward by Soproni, who argued that the construction of the Csörsz Dyke was related to the 332 campaign in the Hungarian Plain. This claim has found wider acceptance, and many scholars tend to agree that the period between 324 and 332 was the most suitable for the erection of the earthwork<sup>1029</sup>. Construction work was hardly possible after 332, a period marked by long internal conflict among the Sarmatians, while the political situation in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century would have called for a different course for the earthwork and would have been senseless in the form of its current line.

Both Mócsy and Soproni associated the Csörsz Dyke with the large-scale construction work in the foreground of the Danubian *ripa* on barbarian soil, regarding the earthwork as part of an elaborate defence system<sup>1030</sup>. Subsequent research, especially the studies by Lőrincz, convincingly proved that the brick stamps from the bridgeheads and counter-forts<sup>1031</sup> (figs 259-260) on the Danube's left bank indicated a date after the mid-350s (Constantius II) for the earliest installations, with the majority dating from the 370s, indicating that they can be linked to the construction projects under Valentinian (fig. 281)<sup>1032</sup>. It thus became clear that the construction of the counter-forts does not support either Mócsy's, or Soproni's theory. In his critique of Soproni's theory, Fitz concluded that Soproni's dating was far too early and suggested a construction date during the reign of Constantius II and Valentinian I<sup>1033</sup>.

Irrespective of the proposed construction dates, most scholars agree that the Csörsz Dyke was an advance defence line to protect the Empire from the German threat and that the earthwork was built on Roman initiative and under Roman supervision in the Sarmatians' land. Mócsy correctly noted that the earthwork »must have been in use for a long time since its course was altered a number of times«<sup>1034</sup>. Its abandonment is usually dated to Valentinian's reign<sup>1035</sup> or after the defeat at Adrianople in 378<sup>1036</sup>, meaning a useful life of no more than two or two-and-a-half generations at the most, even in case of an early construction date.

1025 Soproni 1978, 115.

1026 Mráv 1999, 92-93. – Kiss 2008, 6-7.

1027 Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 47. – Soproni 1978, 113-137. – Garam/Patay/Soproni 2003, 57-70. – Mócsy 1974, 268-272. For a discussion of the chronological schemes, see Tóth 1982, 68-69, with the relevant literature.

1028 Mócsy 1972, 85-86. Two camps opposite Bononia and Aquincum(?) were constructed in the Barbaricum at exactly this time. Mócsy linked these camps to the construction of the Csörsz Dyke. For an overview of the earlier literature, see Tóth 1982, 69 n. 5-6. 11-12.

1029 Soproni 1978, 113-137. For an overview of the earlier literature, see Tóth 1982, 69 n. 7-10.

1030 Soproni 1978, 117.

1031 Their exact function is debated. It was suggested that these structures were designed to hold the Sarmatians at bay and also functioned as a visual display of power (Bertók 1997). In contrast, Nagy 1999, 121-122, argued that they functioned as storage facilities.

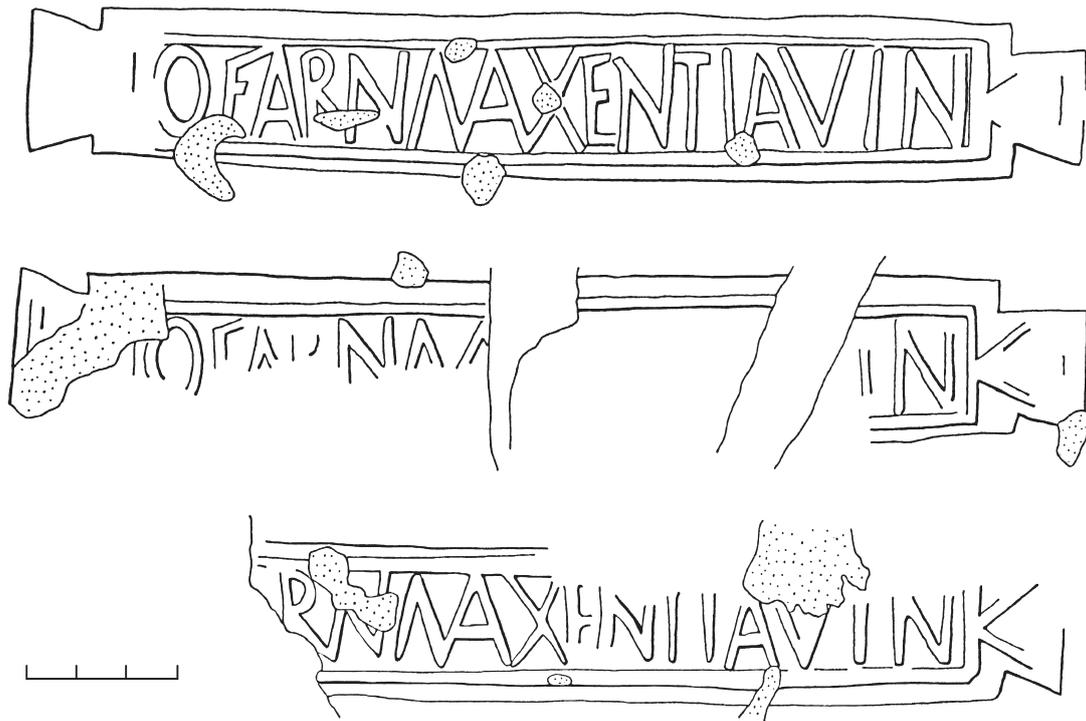
1032 Lőrincz 1999. The latter include the counter-fort at Dunakeszi, which has now been systematically investigated (Mráv 2002).

1033 Fitz 1979, 412-413.

1034 Mócsy 1974, 272.

1035 Mesterházy 1986/1988, 62-63; 1994, 283-284.

1036 Visy 1989, 23.



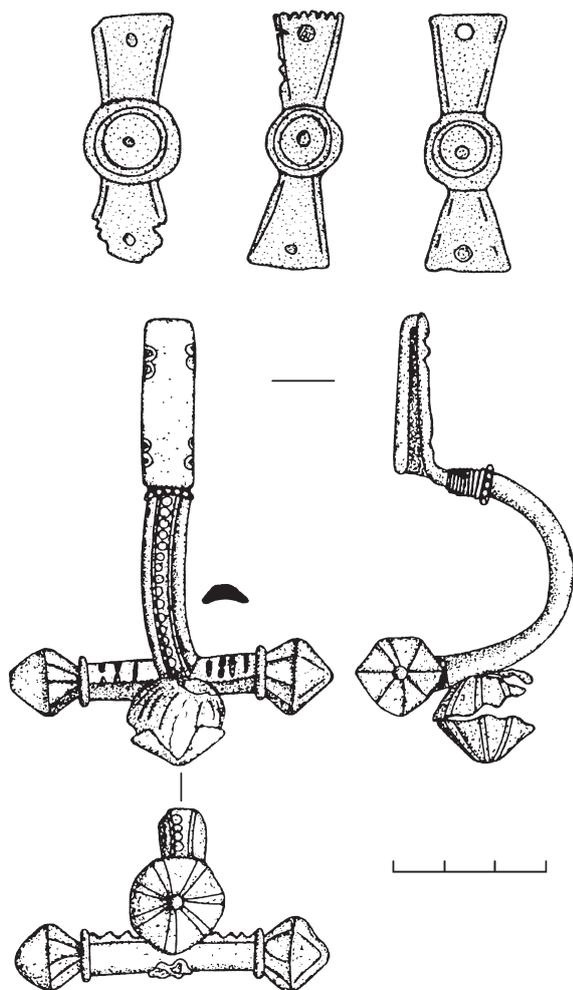
**Fig. 281** Stamped brick with the text OFARN dating from Valentinian's reign, found at Gőd-Bócsaújtelep. – (After Mráv 2005, fig. 17, 2).

The Csörsz Dyke was cut through in several locations as part of the salvage excavations preceding major construction works during the past few years. Although most of these investigations are still unpublished, we know that they have produced little new evidence concerning the Roman Age. One section was investigated at Mezőszemere-Kismari-fenék, for example, together with a section of a nearby cemetery which was assumed to have been used by Sarmatians allied to the Roman Empire who defended the earthwork<sup>1037</sup>, an interpretation based on the earthwork's proximity to the cemetery whose burials contained a relatively high number of Roman finds, including weapons. This interpretation is in sharp contradiction with the dating of the Csörsz Dyke proposed by Mócsy and Soproni because the burial ground cannot be dated earlier than in the second part of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (**fig. 282**). Vaday resolved this contradiction by suggesting that the earthwork had been built after 358<sup>1038</sup>, and made a case for Fitz's dating quoted above. Seeing that in the period proposed by Mócsy and Soproni we have no knowledge of any serious clashes between the barbarians of the Hungarian Plain and the Romans, and that large-scale construction work was performed in the Danube region under Valentinian<sup>1039</sup>, this proposed dating must certainly be taken seriously. After the events following Valentinian's death (the new Quadic-Sarmatian incursion), the Sarmatians lost their former importance and the Hungarian Plain soon came under the control of the Huns.

<sup>1037</sup> Vaday/Domboróczki 2001, esp. 111. 116-122. 204-206. – Vaday 2002; 2003c. Cf. Prohászka 2003, 84.

<sup>1038</sup> Vaday 2003c, 212.

<sup>1039</sup> In addition to the counter-forts mentioned above, the fort at Hatvan-Gombospuszta can also be assigned here (Mráv 2003a).



**Fig. 282** Roman finds from Mezőszemere-Kismarifének. – (After Vaday/Domboróczki 2001, figs 13, 1-3; 53, 2).

Mráv based his argument on the archaeological evidence from the unfinished Roman camp at Göd (fig. 283), as well as the topography and chronology of the Quadic settlements between the ramparts of the Csörsz Dyke. He suggested that:

The innermost line of the earthwork [...] approximately ran along the Quadic-Sarmatian border and was built under Constantine I at the earliest and under Constantius II at the latest<sup>1040</sup> (fig. 270).

In this case, the Csörsz Dyke, ultimately built for the protection of the Sarmatians, would have had two additional outer ramparts running across Quadic territory. According to Mráv, a chronological difference can be assumed between the ramparts that marked the boundary of the Sarmatian lands. In his interpretation, the line of the earthwork was shifted by the Romans during Valentinian's reign. This scenario seems most unlikely to us. The creation of a fixed earthwork boundary between the Sarmatians and the Quadi makes little sense because for several centuries they had acted in concert and the sources repeatedly emphasised the alliance and military camaraderie between the two peoples. We know that they got on well with each other owing to their neighbourhood, their similar customs and weaponry<sup>1041</sup>. A peace treaty concluded under Constantius II clearly reflected the leading role of the Quadi in the region under Araharius, gained at the expense of the Sarmatians under Usafer<sup>1042</sup>.

In the light of the above, it is barely credible that the Quadi would have peacefully acquiesced to a shift in the line of the earthwork to their territory when even the mere plan of a fort incited them to war. The other question is the possible rationale behind the construction of a *vallum* and *fossa* system that could be hardly supported by any barbarian people. This remains a legitimate question even if the area in the foreground of Aquincum had come under Roman administration by 365, the latest date by which the *Notitia Dignitatum* mentioning the *Praefectus legionis Transiacinco* could have been compiled<sup>1043</sup>.

Another problem concerning Mráv's hypothesis is whether the outer two or three ramparts along certain sections of the Csörsz Dyke also date from Valentinian's reign and whether they reflect the increase of the entire Sarmatian territory. This seems most unlikely in view of mounting Germanic pressure.

<sup>1040</sup> Mráv 1999, 97, see also 2003b; 2005.

<sup>1041</sup> Tacit. *Annal.* XII.30. – Dio LXVII.5. – Zosimus I.48. – Ammian XVII.12.1, XVII.12.12. These references were covered by Mráv 1999, 95-96, who also noted that both the archaeological finds and sites are mixed (fig. 270) in this area to the extent

that the boundary between the two peoples can hardly be determined.

<sup>1042</sup> Ammian XVII.12.

<sup>1043</sup> Not.Dign. Occ. XXXIII.65. – Mráv 1999, 99-100.



**Fig. 283** Setout of the Roman camp at Göd, whose construction in the Barbaricum remained unfinished. – (After Mráv 2011, fig. 17).

The wall remains uncovered at Hatvan-Gombospuszta (fig. 284) not far from the Göd camp were usually associated with the earthwork system. This site is dated to Valentinian's reign<sup>1044</sup>.

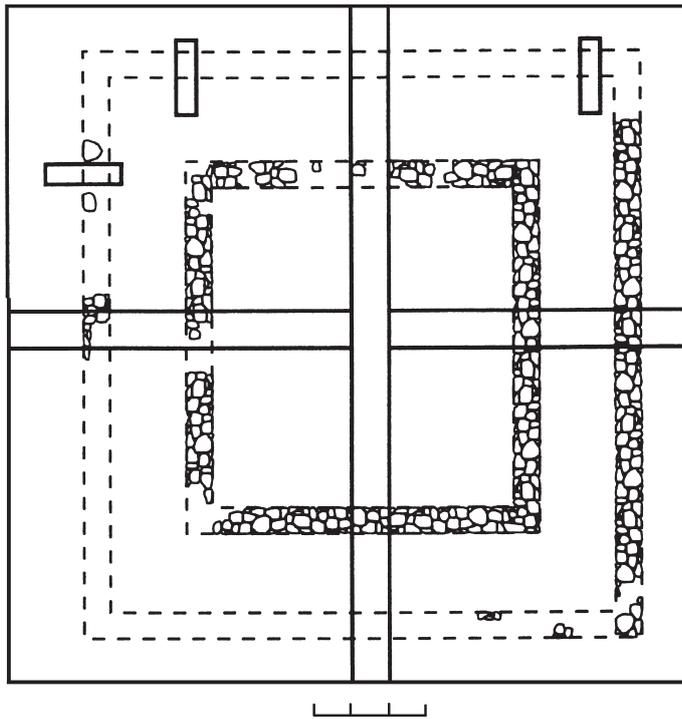
The construction of the fort at Visegrád-Gizella-major (fig. 285) was likewise associated with the creation of the Csörsz Dyke. The fort's construction date is put around 325-330 and the fort itself has been interpreted as the starting point of the earthwork system named *limes Sarmatiae* by modern historians. This supposition is all the more noteworthy because the building at Visegrád remained in use until the first third of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1045</sup>.

The main rationale for dating the Csörsz Dyke to the Roman Age is that the creation of an earthwork on this scale called for a well-organised power for which the Roman Empire was the single candidate between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. A glance at the other dates within the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to 11<sup>th</sup> century range proposed with the aim of providing a more accurate date, indicates that these suggestions can be either rejected or are no more than speculative guesses<sup>1046</sup>. It must also be borne in mind that the territory occupied by the Sarmatians in the 4<sup>th</sup> century extended beyond the Csörsz Dyke in several areas, for example, in the Ier Val-

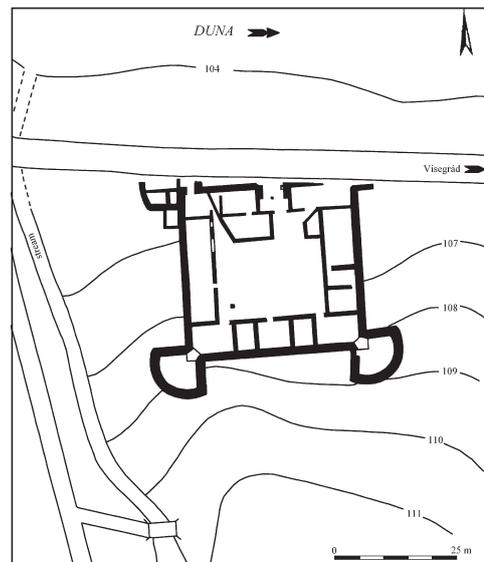
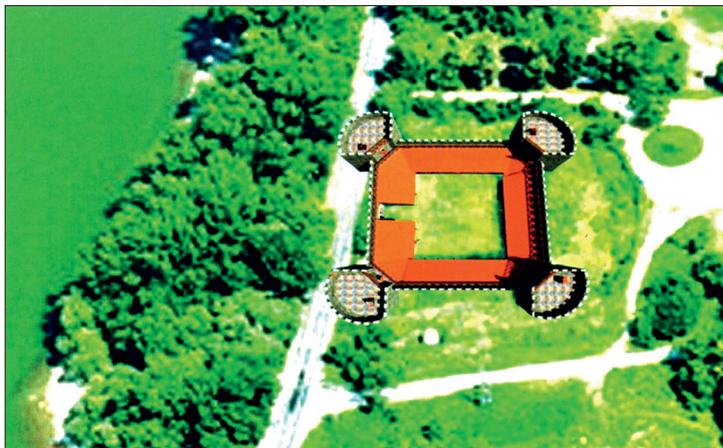
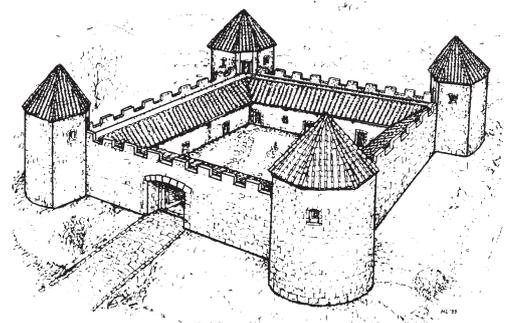
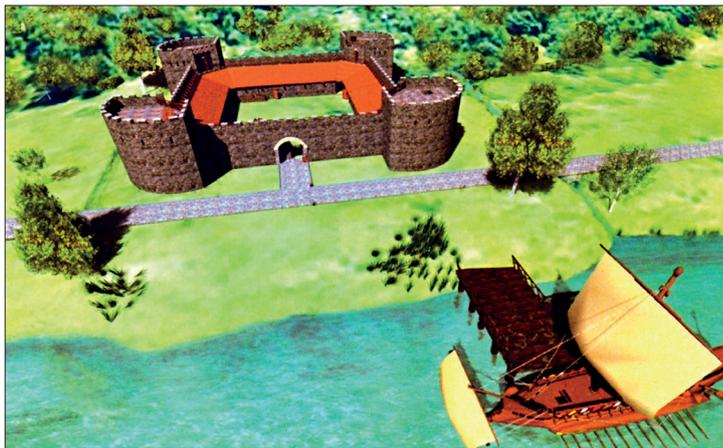
<sup>1044</sup> Mócsy 1972, 91-92.

<sup>1045</sup> Gróh 1994.

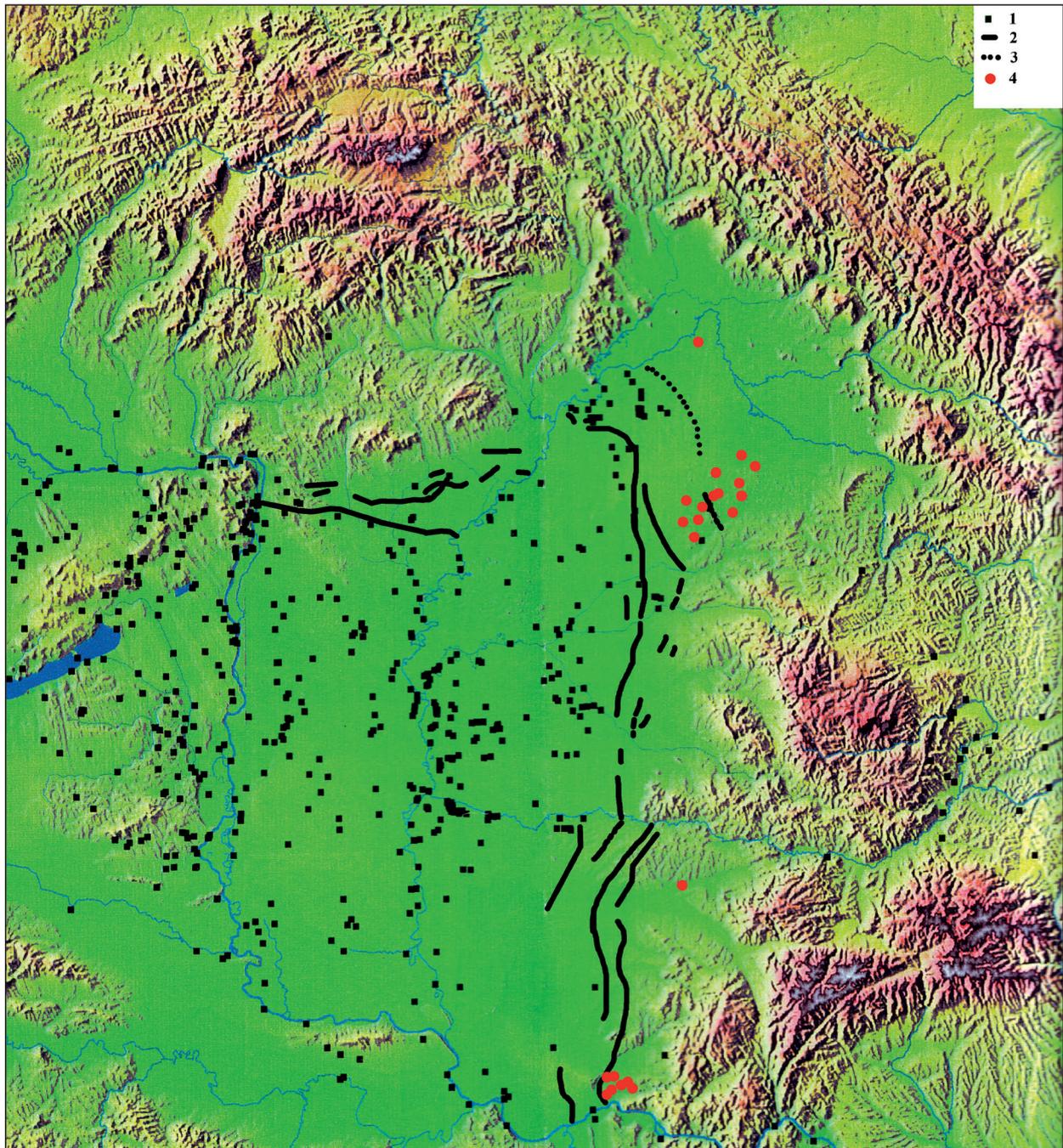
<sup>1046</sup> For the difficulties of dating and the uncertainties involved, see Fiedler 1986, 459-460.



**Fig. 284** Groundplan of the *burgus* at Hatvan-Gombospusztá, associated with the construction of the Csörsz Dyke, but built under Valentinian's reign. – (After Demény-Dittel n. y., 9).



**Fig. 285** The quadrangular, 50 m × 50 m fort with fan shaped angle-towers built in the 340s at Visegrád-Gizella-major, associated with the Csörsz Dyke. – (After Gróf/Gróh 2004, 54. 56; 2011, front and back board).



**Fig. 286** The Sarmatian and Early Avar settlement territory and the line of the Csörsz Dyke: **1** Early Avar site (after ADAM, map 3). – **2** line of the Csörsz Dyke (after Garam/Patay/Soproni 2003, map A). – **3** suggested outer rampart in the Upper Tisza region. – **4** sites outside the Csörsz Dyke (after figs 175. 268).

ley, where Sarmatian sites can be found up to Carei. In contrast, the boundary of the Early Avar territory on the Hungarian Plain more or less conforms to the line of the Csörsz Dyke (fig. 286)<sup>1047</sup>. It is therefore not mere chance that Western European scholars have begun to challenge the earthwork's conventional date and regard the date in the Roman Age as no more than hypothetical or downright incorrect<sup>1048</sup>.

<sup>1047</sup> ADAM, map 3.

<sup>1048</sup> Dittrich 1987, 25-27.

It has been suggested that the Csörsz Dyke and the Brazda lui Novac ramparts were part of the same system created in advance of the *limes*<sup>1049</sup>. Accepting that the ramparts of the two regions were raised according to a uniform concept, the date of the earthworks is influenced by two main considerations. The first of these is that the rampart extends across Dacia, the implication being that it could hardly have been constructed between 106 and 271, which also harmonises with the evidence from the investigation of the Csörsz Dyke. The other is that the Gothic advance affected the Lower Danube region earlier than the Hungarian Plain. The cemeteries of the Marosszentanna-Černjahov culture, reflecting a Gothic presence, made their appearance in the region between the Brazda lui Novac and the Lower Danube in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1050</sup>. In other words, the Germanic peoples had occupied the areas on both sides of the rampart, meaning that there was little rationale for its construction. It must here be noted that 4<sup>th</sup> century pottery and coin finds were brought to light during the investigation of the southern ditch section in Bessarabia<sup>1051</sup>. Several scholars believe that a later date seems more likely for the ramparts in the wider region of the Lower Danube and suggested that the ramparts marked the boundary of the 9<sup>th</sup> century Bulgarian state<sup>1052</sup>. Regarding the function of the Csörsz Dyke, Nagy recently argued that the ramparts had perhaps functioned as roads used by both the Romans and the barbarians because all the currently known and reconstructed roads had a west to east course (fig. 287) and only the ramparts of the earthwork were suitable for acting as a north to south military deployment route<sup>1053</sup>. This suggestion is complemented by Patay's two recent studies on the northern Bácska/Bačka and Kiskunság ramparts, in which he also argued for their interpretation as Roman roads (figs 276, 2. 8; 280). In view of the fact that not one single strategic auxiliary structure, such as a watchtower or a camp, has yet been discovered along the earthwork, an interpretation as a road seems quite feasible. The route of Constantine's 332 campaign can be cited in support of this interpretation. He set off from Nagytétény (Campona), crossed the Danube into the Barbaricum and traversed the Hungarian Plain, entering the Empire again at Margum, a route that roughly corresponds to the line of the Csörsz Dyke (fig. 261). The case may be the same with the campaign of Velius Rufus in 89 (fig. 163). It seems to us that the issues concerning the construction date and the possible function of the Csörsz Dyke can only be firmly resolved after the assessment of recent investigations along the dyke and additional excavations of the earthwork.

#### The So-Called Roman Ramparts in the Bačka/Bácska Region (fig. 276, 4-6)

The dating of the Bačka earthworks to the Roman Age is based essentially on Marsigli's description and maps of the late 17<sup>th</sup>-early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He marked a *castellum* on the eastern side of the rampart in four locations. However, Frölich's survey revealed that the buildings in question were not *castella*, but structures with some other function, indicated by their elongated form (the earthen banks ran parallel to the rampart for 240m, their width, perpendicular to the rampart, was less than 50m). They were open towards the rampart and the ditch was dug on their inner side<sup>1054</sup>.

Although Frölich noted that Marsigli's date lacked any solid evidence, he nonetheless accepted the Roman Age dating and discussed the earthwork's possible function within this framework. He rejected the

1049 Horedt 1968, 48. – Soproni 1978, 116.

1050 This problem has been already discussed by Horedt 1968, 50, who suggested a date in the 1<sup>st</sup> century for the Brazda lui Novac.

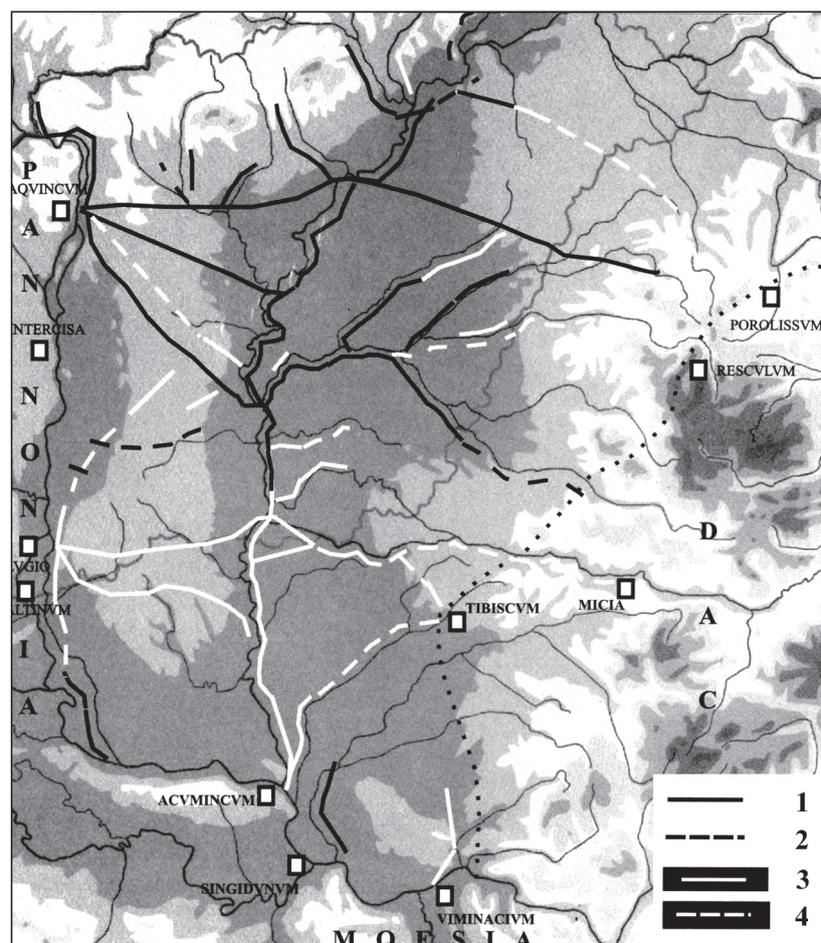
1051 Fiedler 1986, 460, with the relevant literature.

1052 For a detailed discussion, see Fiedler 1986, 460-461, with the relevant literature.

1053 Mihály Nagy 1997, 156.

1054 Frölich 1887, 208-209.

**Fig. 287** Reconstructed trade routes leading through the Sarmatian lands in the Carpathian Basin based on the distribution of Roman imports: **1** section of road determined on the basis of terra sigillata and enamelled brooch finds. – **2** section determined only on the basis of terra sigillata finds. – **3** section determined only on the basis of enamelled brooch finds – **4** section suggested on the basis of the distribution of enamelled brooches. – After Vaday 2003a, fig. 2). – Recent excavations have shown that concentrations of Roman finds do not necessarily reflect a former trade route.



possibility of the earthwork being a flood embankment owing to the lack of levelling. Neither did a role as a road seem likely in view of the earthwork's meandering line, the fact that it did not lead across deep, waterlogged areas and because the width of its crown was uneven. Neither was its course topographically justified in several areas<sup>1055</sup>.

In our opinion, Frölich's arguments are not convincing on every count. The presence of ditches flanking both sides of the rampart seems to favour an interpretation as a road. The deeper-lying sections, where the ramparts are interrupted, may have been linked with bridges. A glance at the topography of the »Lesser Rampart« reveals that Apatin, one of the earthwork's terminals, occupies a strategically key position on the Danube, in a defensible location controlling the marshland opposite the Drava mouth. This line of the earthwork extended from Apatin to Čurug, another strategic location on the testimony of the maps: the waterlogged marshland of the Tisza floodplain narrowed at this point, offering an excellent crossing to the territory east of Tisza. The north to south line of the »Lesser Rampart« ends at Bačko Petrovo Selo in the north, lying in an area with a similar topography. The »Greater Rampart« ran along a course avoiding the marshland around the Tisza mouth, connecting the two waterways. It ended at Čurug, in a topographically excellent location and Novi Sad also occupied a key position throughout its history.

Dating remains a problem. Gallina has pointed out that if the rampart had a continuation in Transdanubia, then the dating to the Roman Age is not tenable<sup>1056</sup>. However, a date in the Roman Age should only be

<sup>1055</sup> Frölich 1887, 306-307.

<sup>1056</sup> Gallina 1999a, 70.

rejected if the earthwork is interpreted as a defensive structure marking a territorial border. If it functioned as a road, then it may well have extended to the right bank of the Danube.

If the ramparts were indeed intended to be used as roads and had indeed been built during the Roman Age, then they provided an excellent route for the Roman troops marching repeatedly through the Sarmatian lands. However, this interpretation is no more than speculation, similar to Frölich's imaginative claim that the earthwork was built by the Romans when they intervened in the conflict between the Arcaragantes and the Limigantes. In his view, the »Greater Roman Rampart« can be identified with the immense Roman rampart constructed by Constantius,

[...] who *placed a rampart* near Acimincum and erected a high mound in the manner of a tribunal, ships carrying some light-armed legionaries were ordered to patrol the channel of the river near the banks, with one Innocentius, a field-measurer, who had recommended the plan, in order that, if they should see the savages beginning disorder, they might attack them in the rear, when their attention was turned elsewhere<sup>1057</sup>.

In this case, the passage belies the credibility of the interpretation based on it because, according to Ammianus, it was the barbarians who pleaded with the emperor to »allow them to cross the river and come to him.« If they arrived at the location where the emperor had raised the earthwork by crossing the river, this would imply that Ammianus located their lands on the right bank of the Danube, which is hardly feasible.

Another hypothesis must also be mentioned. Fiedler suggested that the »Lesser Roman Rampart« can perhaps be linked to the ramparts in the Lower Danube region, the implication being that they were erected considerably later, at the time of the Bulgarians' clashes with the Avars<sup>1058</sup>.

We may therefore conclude that, like the debate over the Csörsz Dyke, the controversies concerning the rampart, and especially the issue of dating, can only be resolved by future fieldwork and excavations.

#### The Ramparts in the Kiskunság (Cumania Minor) Area and along the Körös (figs 276, 2-3; 280)

The uncertainties in the dating of the ditch and rampart flanking the Körös are even greater than in the case of the Csörsz Dyke. Soproni initially associated the ditch with the Gepids and dated its creation to around 358, based on the historical data<sup>1059</sup>. Later, he rejected this date and argued for a construction after the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1060</sup>.

In a recent overview of the investigation of the Kiskunság rampart, Gallina accepted a dating to the Roman Age because he concurred with the view that its line could be linked to the Csörsz Dyke enclosing the Hungarian Plain and that it was therefore built between 271 and 378 in the period between the evacuation of Dacia and the Battle of Adrianople. At the same time, he also linked the construction work to the protection of the Lugio (Dunaszekcső)-Csongrád road, one of the major trade routes between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries (fig. 287)<sup>1061</sup>. It is difficult to fit this conjecture into an historical context because it is unclear against whom the northern part of the Hungarian Plain had to be defended in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries and who the potential attackers from the south were, seeing that the area between the rampart and the Roman province was

<sup>1057</sup> Ammian XIX.11. – Frölich 1887, 309-310. Italics added for emphasis.

<sup>1058</sup> Fiedler 1986, 461-463.

<sup>1059</sup> Soproni 1978, 118.

<sup>1060</sup> Garam/Patay/Soproni 2003, 61.

<sup>1061</sup> Gallina 1999a, 69. 74. 78-80. It must be borne in mind that this is a hypothetical Roman road which, cutting across the Danube-Tisza interfluvium, is assumed to have linked Pannonia and the Tisza section with the Körös confluence.

settled by Sarmatians, as was the area north of the rampart on the testimony of the archaeological finds. The region was still settled by the Sarmatians in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, as evinced by Ammianus. He recorded that in 374/5: »Theodosius the younger, Duke of Moesia [...] in many encounters defeated and vanquished the Free Sarmatians [...] who had invaded our frontier on the other side«<sup>1062</sup>. This passage tallies with the archaeological record showing that the territory bordering on Moesia was controlled by the Sarmatians (judging from the passage, specifically by the Arcaragantes). The various Sarmatian groups were unlikely to have built the rampart, regardless of the civil war between them at the time. But if the Sarmatians are to be credited with the construction, the earthwork could hardly have been part of the same defensive system as the Csörsz Dyke, as assumed by Gallina.

In sum, we may say that the dating of the earthworks identified in the Sarmatian occupied regions of the Carpathian Basin, as well as the determination of their function remains a task for future research. Although these monuments are continuously eroded by agricultural cultivation, new research techniques, such as aerial archaeological photography, the study of satellite images and geophysical prospection, will enable a mapping of the earthwork's precise course, while future excavations will no doubt contribute to a more accurate dating, one of the main prerequisites for their interpretation.

### The Archaeological Record

The period's archaeological heritage was first classified by Párducz, who distinguished three major groups: 1) the Bajmök-Móraháalom group; 2a) the Kiszombor-Ernőháza group; 2b) the Tápé-Malajdok group; and, 3) the mound cemeteries and burials. In Párducz's scheme, the Bajmök-Móraháalom group is dated between 350 and 450. The group's funerary rite was characterised by a west to east orientation and by burying the dead in a sitting position. The group was distributed in the southern part of the Hungarian Plain, south of the Maros and the Szeged-Baja line. After 350, the Sarmatians absorbed and assimilated the earlier local population<sup>1063</sup>.

Dated between 270 and 350, the Kiszombor-Ernőháza group represented a continuation of the earlier Sarmatian culture on the Hungarian Plain, with the Tápé-Malajdok group embodying the late phase of this group (350-430) coloured by new immigrant elements. They buried their dead in coffins held together by iron clamps and orientated the graves in a south to north direction. The group's sites are distributed across the entire Hungarian Plain<sup>1064</sup>.

Párducz believed that the population interring its dead under mounds reached the Hungarian Plain in two waves. The communities raising the northern kurgans occupied the area in the last third of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, while the mounds in the south, lying south of the Szeged-Baja line, concealed the burials of an immigrant population arriving later, sometime around the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century. Párducz suggested that the latter could be identified with the Roxolani in view of a few burials determined by him as »diagonal«<sup>1065</sup>.

Later research has proven that Párducz's classification was erroneous<sup>1066</sup>. This is hardly surprising, given that the archaeological record available 60-70 years ago was very patchy, made up of poorly observed and documented grave assemblages from looted burials and stray finds. Párducz's efforts to classify the material must nonetheless be appreciated because his methodological treatment of the material – the construction of a

<sup>1062</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.

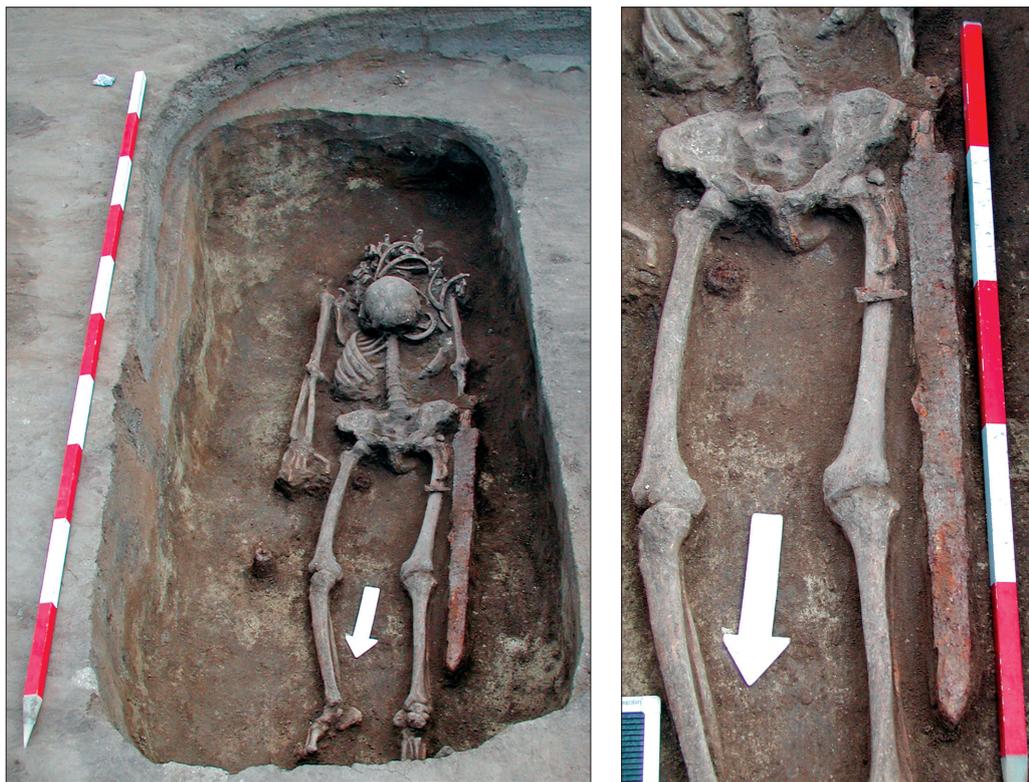
<sup>1063</sup> Párducz 1950a, esp. 241-242 fig. 2.

<sup>1064</sup> Párducz 1950a, esp. 246-247. 250 fig. 3, 5.

<sup>1065</sup> Párducz 1950a, 252-254 fig. 6. Diagonal burials (fig. 75) with the deceased laid roughly diagonally in an almost

square grave pit were linked to the Roxolani by earlier Soviet research. It has since become clear that this identification was erroneous.

<sup>1066</sup> Vaday 1989b, 36-38.



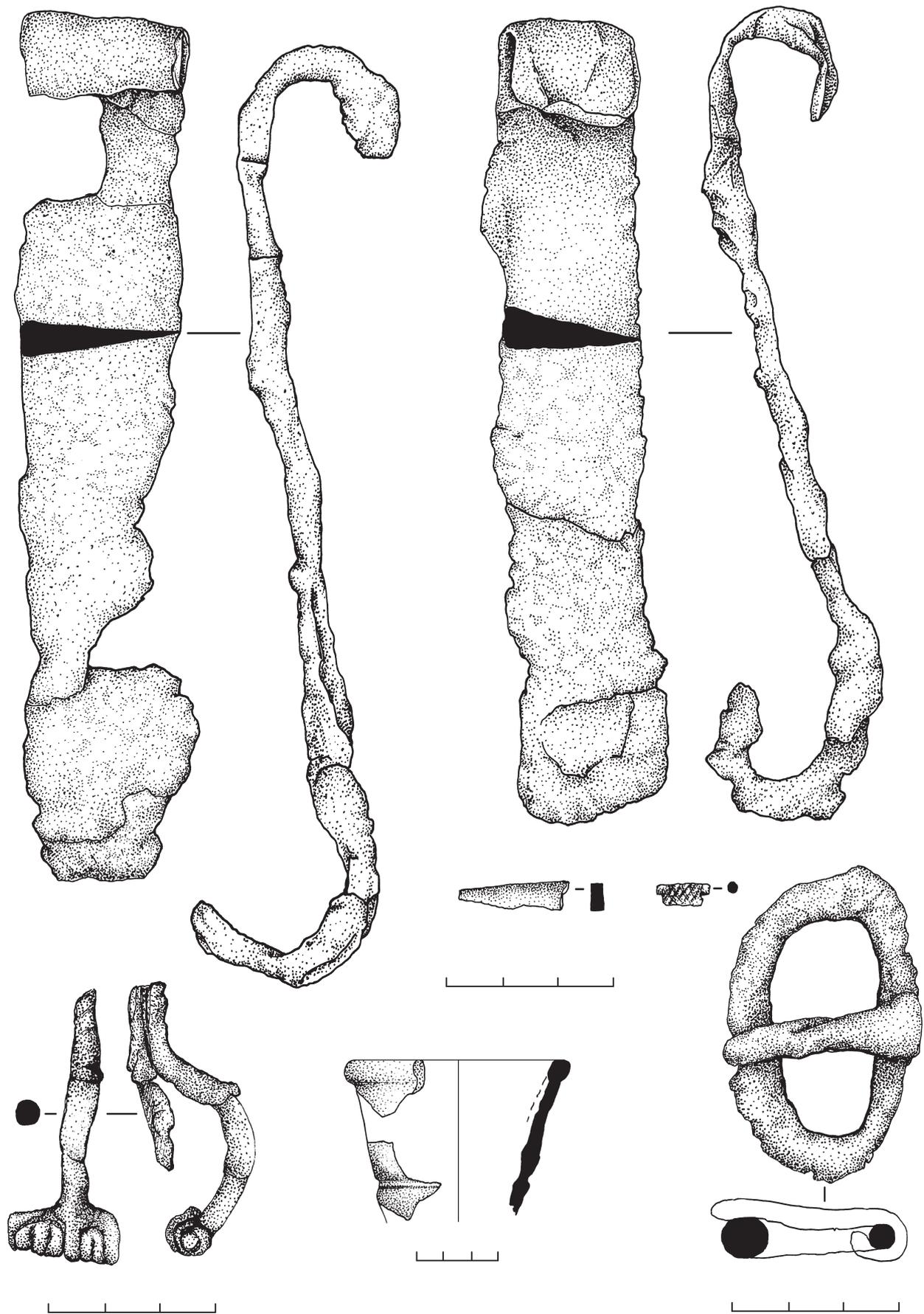
**Fig. 288** The majority of weapon graves dates from the Late Roman period: Ecser, Site 7, Feature 250. – (KM V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished).

chronological framework and an ethnic attribution based on burial rites and grave goods – has withstood the test of time. His studies were useful for subsequent research<sup>1067</sup>.

Despite the immense number of new, well-documented finds unearthed during the forty years that have elapsed since Párducz's work, there has been no major breakthrough in Sarmatian research. No substantial change can be demonstrated in the archaeological record of the Hungarian Plain during the late 3<sup>rd</sup>-first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. The cessation of *sigillata* imports poses serious difficulties in accurately dating the known finds. Basically, the find assemblages dated to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, whether from settlements or burials, are assigned to that period because they lack both the typical artefacts of the late 2<sup>nd</sup>-first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries and the find types appearing in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>-early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. In many cases, the assemblages in question are assigned to even broader time brackets, and simply dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dating is all the more problematic because most elements of the burial rite remained unchanged during successive centuries (fig. 288).

We attempted to identify the 4<sup>th</sup> century find material based on coin-dated burials (fig. 289). Obviously, much care needs to be exercised using this approach, too, seeing that the coins only provide a *terminus post quem* and that a particular artefact type may have been in use earlier as well. While brooches with inverted or side-turned feet provide a good chronological anchor, the majority can be dated to within a fairly broad time frame (fig. 255). The one and two-piece variants of these brooches were both popular throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Large pieces were quite common. Buckles and brooches were predominantly made from iron. Buckles are usually oval in form and have a thickened frame, but in contrast to the later, 5<sup>th</sup>-century pieces, the prong does not cope over the frame. Lunulas again became popular (figs 289-290).

<sup>1067</sup> Párducz/Korek 1946/1948. – Párducz 1973; 1974.



**Fig. 289** Madaras-Halmok, Grave 187 probably dated between 250 and 350. – (After Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1994b, 71-72 fig. 7).



**Fig. 290** Characteristic 4<sup>th</sup> century Sarmatian female costume from Kiskundorozsma-Subasa, Grave 121. – (After Bozsik 2003, figs 8, 10).

Despite the many efforts in this field, the dating of vessels remains one of the problems bedeviling Sarmatian archaeology in the Carpathian Basin. The most common vessel shapes were used for some three hundred years (fig. 242). No more than a few distinctive types and decorations can be regarded as exceptions. Bowls with curved sides can also be assigned to this period<sup>1068</sup>. One puzzling phenomenon is that while there is a general consensus that Roman imports declined by the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, gritty wares tempered with sand and pebbles (fig. 251), most often pots, made their appearance in the Barbaricum at this time. It was unclear for a long time whether these products were provincial in origin or whether they

<sup>1068</sup> Vaday 1980/1981, 128; 1989b, 149-150.

were copies of Roman models produced outwith the Empire's borders. The large-scale excavations (around 40 hectares) at Üllő in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought the discovery of a Sarmatian pottery workshop specialising in the production of gritty ware (fig. 291). The preliminary assessment of the finds suggests that the manufacture of this ceramic type began in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century and continued until at least the close of the 4<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1069</sup>.

The number of coins in the Barbaricum increased at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The number of coins issued during the Tetrarchy is relatively high, while the coins of Constantine I and Constantius II are scarcer than in the province. Very few coins of Valentinian have been reported from the Hungarian Plain<sup>1070</sup>. A comparison with the Upper Tisza region indicates that considerably fewer coins are known here from this period. No more than ten coins representing the entire Constantine Dynasty have been found in County Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. Two of these are *solidi* from Porcsalma and Nyírtét, one is a counterfeit from Petneháza. The coin finds are scattered across the area, and there is no evidence that the Csörsz Dyke marks the boundary of their distribution<sup>1071</sup>.

The relatively detailed accounts of the Sarmatian civil war in the written sources have tempted several scholars to link certain archaeological phenomena to these events. Many of these suggestions are wholly unfounded. For example, Bóna claimed that the Sarmatian settlements in the area between the Maros and the Körös were abandoned after the Gothic raids of 332. In fact, the mass presence of Sarmatian sites in the area can be hardly denied<sup>1072</sup>.

More recently, Vaday and Domboróczki identified the re-settled Arcaragantes with the population using the cemetery at Mezőszemere-Kismari-fenek in the northern part of the Hungarian Plain. They suggested that, as allies of the Romans in the 370s–380s, Zizais' people were entrusted with the defence of the Csörsz Dyke's section constructed after 358. The evidence for the alliance with Rome was provided by two onion-headed brooches and propeller belt-fittings (fig. 282)<sup>1073</sup>. However, a few onion-headed brooches have been reported from other Sarmatian sites, too<sup>1074</sup>. Moreover, one of the pieces from Mezőszemere came to light in a female burial. These finds belie the possibility that the occurrence of these artefacts indicates a group of barbarians in Roman service. The hypothesis is even less acceptable historically because we know that the Limigantes launched a massive attack against the Romans in the Aquincum area in the late 350s. While Ammianus obviously concluded his report with a major Roman victory, it must be recalled that the emperor's life had been seriously endangered and that his tribune of the *scutarii* (shield-bearers) was killed. The punitive expedition was called off owing to the events on the eastern front. The Arcaragantes, allies of Rome, were re-settled in the same territory that they occupied in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, and they can thus be located in the region of the mouth of the Tisza after the defeat of the Limigantes and not to the northern part of the Hungarian Plain. Zizais and his people can therefore hardly be sought in the Mezőszemere area following the events of 350. Their settlement territory lay in the southern part of the Hungarian Plain in the

<sup>1069</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár/Mérai 2011.

<sup>1070</sup> Lányi 1990, 214.

<sup>1071</sup> Istvánovits 2002, 281. – Fülöp 1976, 258-259. – Vaday 1970, 137. Lányi 1990, 213-214, observed that Roman coins are much scarcer from Constantine I to Valentinian I in the Barbaricum bordering on Pannonia in the east than in the province, and that this phenomenon is valid for the area enclosed by the ramparts, which served as further confirmation for the dating of the Csörsz Dyke; an argument that must be re-examined in the light of the new excavations and their finds.

<sup>1072</sup> Mócsy/Bóna 1965, 115. According to Bóna around 340, the Gepids would have begun their migration from the Upper

Tisza region to the Maros-Tisza-Körös angle, and by 358, this relocation would have become a mass phenomenon (see also the data mentioned above). A glance at the list of sites in the volume on the archaeological survey of County Békés (e.g. MRT 1989) clearly refutes this claim.

<sup>1073</sup> Vaday/Domboróczki 2001, esp. 111. 116-122. 204-206. – Vaday 2002; 2003c.

<sup>1074</sup> Vaday/Domboróczki 2001, 74-75. Two brooches of this type have been reported from Madaras-Halmok (Kőhegyi/Vörös 2011, pls 41, 5; 101, 6). Cf. Quast 2015.



**Fig. 291** Pottery kiln from Üllő, Site 5 (V. Kulcsár's excavation, unpublished) and detail of a house with fragments of locally made pots, from Üllő, Site 9 (R. Patay's excavation, unpublished). The production of gritty ware began in the in the Sarmatian Barbaricum in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Potters who dwelt at the settlement, 40 hectare large surface of which was uncovered in Üllő were producing this type of vessels until the close of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In 374, »the Free Sarmatians (so called to distinguish them from their rebellious slaves)« were raiding Moesia (see the next chapter)<sup>1075</sup>.

In sum, we may say that in contrast to the unexpected richness of the documentary evidence, and the unusually detailed reports on the period's events, the classification, accurate dating and interpretation of the period's archaeological finds remains a task for future research.

## THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE: THE HUNNIC INVASION

*And when these walls, with sad regrets, shall fall to raise a bath,  
Then shall the Huns in multitude break forth with might and wrath.  
By force of arms the barrier-stream of Ister they shall cross,  
O'er Scythic ground and Moesian lands spreading dismay and loss*<sup>1076</sup>.

The year of Valentinian's death, 375, marked the onset of a new period. The Huns crossed the borders of Europe. In Váczy's words, »the Huns' western advance was an event of immense historical significance because it broke the hegemony of the Iranian nomads on the steppe [...] and precipitated the gradual Turkisation of the western steppe«<sup>1077</sup>.

With the appearance of the Huns in Europe, the roughly one-and-a-half-thousand kilometres long frontier extending from the Danube Bend to the Pontic suddenly became a single continuous military frontline. While the Sarmatians' earlier history in the Carpathian Basin was shaped by their relations with the neighbouring Roman provinces, the events were from now on influenced by what happened on the steppe, principally the Huns' advance and the flow of peoples dislodged by the Huns. The events discussed in this chapter are set against this background.

### The Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain During Valentinian's Reign

The sources on the history of the Sarmatians in the Hungarian Plain gradually fall silent and very often all we have are a few scattered references here and a few random words there. For example:

At this time [in 365] the trumpet [...] gave signal for war throughout the whole Roman world; and the barbarian tribes on our frontier were moved to make incursion on those territories which lay nearest to them [...] the Sarmatians and Quadi ravaged Pannonia<sup>1078</sup>.

One of the known events is a war that broke out over the construction activities under Valentinian. As military tension grew, fortifying the Empire's borders became a pressing priority and Valentinian spared no effort to strengthen the defences. Ammianus Marcellinus recorded that Valentinian »from the beginning of his reign had been full of a resolution to fortify his frontier«<sup>1079</sup>. The earlier military installations were renovated and reinforced, especially in the Danube region. It would appear that several new Roman counter-forts were

<sup>1075</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.15.

<sup>1076</sup> Ammian XXXI.1.

<sup>1077</sup> Váczy 1986, 63.

<sup>1078</sup> Ammian XXVI.4.5 (cf. Alföldi 1942a, 683).

<sup>1079</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.2. – CTh. 15.1.13.

erected on the Danube's left bank in the Sarmatian lands and the earlier ones, the so-called Nógrádverőce-type forts (previously dated to Diocletian's reign), were also renewed (figs 259-260). The FRIGIDERIUS DUX stamps from the Danubian *limes* indicate that this activity can be dated to the early 370s<sup>1080</sup>. Most of these were fortified ports, perhaps with storage facilities, built at strategically important crossing points. The buildings erected opposite each other on the river's two banks secured the fording place. These forts formed a dense chain along the border of Valeria: Szob, Verőce, Dunakeszi (fig. 260), Harta-Kali-major, Bátmonostor and Bač on the left bank, and Kisoroszi-Pásztorkert, Tahitótfalu-Balhavár, Szentendre-Dera patak, Horány, Szigetújfalu, Bölcske and Dunaszekcső on the islets and the right bank (fig. 292)<sup>1081</sup>.

The clashes were sparked by the construction work on the border with the Quadi and the Sarmatians. We have seen that Roman military building activities had been conducted in the Sarmatian Barbaricum and thus Mráv understandably concluded that in this case, the planned programme of defensive building was on a larger scale than »usual«<sup>1082</sup>. The Quadi protested that the Romans treated the »south side of the river Danube, in the very territories of the Quadi« as their own land, and that the erection of the fortification was begun without their knowledge and consent. Mócsy noted that it could hardly have been mere chance that the foundations of the building were laid on the border with the Sarmatians: the plan was aimed against the Sarmatians and not against the Quadi, reflected also by the choice of location in an area whose possession by the Quadi or the Sarmatians could be contested<sup>1083</sup>. Instead of remedying the conflict, the Romans simply murdered Gabinius, King of the Quadi who came to complain. The Roman commander Marcellianus, *dux Valeriae*, invited the unsuspecting ruler to a feast and had him assassinated.

These events occurred in the summer of 374<sup>1084</sup>. Quoting Patsch, Alföldi noted that this was the very last instance that a Roman emperor entered barbarian land bordering on this province<sup>1085</sup>. The events were recounted by Ammianus Marcellinus:

[...] the nation of the Quadi was roused to make a sudden movement. It was a nation now not very formidable, but one which had formerly enjoyed vast renown for its warlike genius and power. [...] And indeed they had, for barbarians, just ground of complaint. For Valentinian, who from the beginning of his reign had been full of a resolution to fortify his frontier, which was a glorious decision, but one carried too far in this case, ordered a fortress capable of containing a strong garrison to be constructed on the south side of the river Danube, in the very territories of the Quadi as if they were subject to the Roman authority. The natives, being very indignant at this, and anxious for their own rights and safety, at first contented themselves with trying to avert the evil by an embassy and expostulations. But Maximin, always eager for any wickedness, and unable to bridle his natural arrogance, which was now increased by

<sup>1080</sup> Frigeridus received the title *comes et magister utriusque militiae* from Terentius at this time. For Frigeridus, see Alföldi 1924/1926, 82-86. – Lőrincz 1976, 104-105. – Mócsy/Fitz 1990, 85. – Lőrincz 1999, 54. – Nagy 1999. Recent research has shown that Frigeridus can be identified with the individual mentioned by Ammianus who was relieved of his duties owing to the scheming of his adversaries. Misgovernment by Marcellianus, his successor, led to the outbreak of a new war (for the relevant literature, see Mráv 1999, n. 48). In this case, all the buildings attributed to him were erected before the war, i. e. before 374, the most likely date being between 371 and 373.

<sup>1081</sup> Visy 2003, 125-129, with the relevant literature; Bernát 2006, 183-184 n. 5, with a fairly detailed map.

<sup>1082</sup> Mráv 1999, 93-94. This was hardly an isolated case. Valentinian had already attempted to proceed with military construction in the land of the Alamanns, an endeavour with an equally ill-fated outcome (Ammian XXVIII.2.2).

<sup>1083</sup> Mócsy 1974, 293-294. – Cf. Mráv 1999, 94-95. His assertion seems realistic because it is clear from Ammian's report on the peace treaty concluding the events of 357-358 that Usafer, one of the Sarmatians' chieftains(?), was a subordinate of the Quadi.

<sup>1084</sup> For arguments in support of the date of 374, see Alföldi 1963, 94 n. 56. A smaller Sarmatian raid against the Banat occurred in 372 or 373, which was successfully repelled by the Romans (Alföldi 1942a, 684, based on Egger's research).

<sup>1085</sup> Patsch 1929. – Alföldi 1942a, 685.



**Fig. 292** Paired forts (brown dots) in the Middle Danube Valley in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. – (After Bernát 2006; map M. Ober, RGZM).

the pride which he felt in his rank as prefect, reproached Equitius, who at that time was the commander of the forces in Illyricum, as careless and inactive, because the work, which it was ordered should be carried on with all speed, was not yet finished. And he added, as a man guided only by zeal for the common good, that if the rank of Duke of Valeria were only conferred on his own little son, Marcellianus, the fortification would be soon completed without any more pretexts for delay. Both his wishes were presently granted. Marcellianus received the promotion thus suggested, and set out to take possession of his government; and when he reached it, being full of untimely arrogance, as might be expected from the son of such a father, without attempting to conciliate those whom false dreams of gain had caused to quit their native land, he applied himself to the work which had been recently begun, and had only been suspended to afford an opportunity for the inhabitants to present petitions against it. Lastly, when their king Gabinius requested, in a most moderate tone, that no innovations

might be made, he as if intending to assent to his petition, with feigned courtesy invited him and some other persons to a banquet: and then as he was departing after the entertainment, unsuspecting of treachery, he caused him, in infamous violation of the sacred rights of hospitality, to be murdered<sup>1086</sup>.

Valentinian seemed reluctant to remedy the situation:

[...] it was expected that, as a man of active and impetuous feelings, he [Valentinian] would speedily command the judges to be condemned through whose perfidy or desertion the empire had been left undefended on the side of the Pannonians, yet when he did arrive he was so lukewarm in the business that he neither inquired into the death of the king Gabinius, nor did he make any accurate investigation into the calamities which the republic had sustained, with a view to learning through whose misconduct or negligence these events had taken place<sup>1087</sup>.

Earlier, Mócsy had assumed that Gabinius' death could be linked to the construction of the *burgus* at Hatvan-Gombospuszta (**fig. 284**)<sup>1088</sup>. However, more recent research would suggest that the fort (*munitionum*) mentioned by Ammianus can be identified with the unusually large fort measuring 400 m × 290 m investigated at Göd-Bócsaújtelep in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (**fig. 283**). The construction of this fort remained unfinished. The brick stamps indicate that the architectural remains at Göd can be dated to Valentinian's reign (**fig. 281**). Mráv, who excavated the fort and published his findings, suggested that the building activity was abandoned owing to the events recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus<sup>1089</sup>, and he also raised the possibility that the Roman buildings at Hatvan-Gombospuszta, which could similarly be linked to the *legio II adiutrix* on the testimony of the bricks bearing the stamp of FRIGERIDUS DUX, had likewise remained unfinished<sup>1090</sup>.

The other report on the incursion was written by Zosimus, who also recorded that Valentinian had weakened the defences of the Middle Danubian provinces by transferring troops from Pannonia and Upper Moesia to fight against the pretender Firmus in northern Africa. Learning about the weakness of the army, the barbarians set out on their raids with a vengeance<sup>1091</sup>:

[...] the Africans [...] gave the purple robe to Firmus, and proclaimed him emperor [...] Valentinian [...] immediately commanded some legions from the stations in Pannonia and Moesia, to embark for Africa. On this the Sarmatians and the Quadi, who had long entertained a hatred for Celestius, the governor of those countries, availing themselves, of the opportunity afforded by the departure of the legions for Africa, invaded the Pannonians and Moesians. Celestius had infringed an oath, and had not only treacherously deceived, but had murdered their chief at a banquet. The barbarians therefore revenged themselves by plundering all the country along the

<sup>1086</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.1-5.

<sup>1087</sup> Ammian XXX.5.3.

<sup>1088</sup> Mócsy 1972, 101.

<sup>1089</sup> Mráv 1999; 2003b; 2005, with further literature. Mráv weaves a fascinating story around the building, creating the impression that its entire history is known. The problem, however, is that his reconstruction is based on a chain of hypotheses, such as the dating of the Csörsz Dyke, the exact line of the dyke and its role as a border, as well as the existence of Sarmatian auxiliary troops, etc. Ammianus'

report paints a picture of devastation and decay. Most towns lay in ruins, the walls of Sirmium, Carnuntum and Savaria had fallen. It is therefore difficult to conceptualise the creation of a defence system as envisioned by Mráv. The single acceptable element in his historic reconstruction is that the construction of the building was begun under Valentinian and that its erection can be linked to the events described by Ammianus.

<sup>1090</sup> Mráv 2003a, 209.

<sup>1091</sup> Várady 1961, 22.

Ister, carrying off all that they found in the towns. The Pannonians were by these means exposed to the cruelty of the barbarians, while the soldiers were extremely negligent in the defence of their towns, and committed as much mischief as the barbarians themselves in all places on this side of the river. But Moesia was free from harm, because Theodosius, who commanded the forces there, courageously resisted the barbarians, and routed them when they attacked him<sup>1092</sup>.

What is quite certain is that these events occurred at a particularly unfortunate moment from a Roman perspective. Pannonia suffered from the rule of corrupt and despotic officials. Life in the towns took a turn for the worse and the army also played its share in the oppression.

Let us see what happened, as narrated by Ammianus:

The report of so atrocious an act was speedily spread abroad, and roused the indignation of the Quadi and other surrounding tribes, who, bewailing the death of the king, collected together and sent, forth predatory bands, which crossed the Danube; and when no hostilities were looked for, attacked the people who were occupied in the fields about the harvest; and having slain the greater portion of them, carried off all the survivors to their own country with a great booty of different kinds of cattle<sup>1093</sup>.

The Quadi turned to their Sarmatian neighbours for help and together they devastated Pannonia. It is uncertain whether the incursions were launched jointly by the two allied barbarian peoples or whether the raids were conducted separately, but as part of a concerted action<sup>1094</sup>. Ammianus merely noted that the assaults affected the state-run estate of Prista lying between Sirmium and Cibalae, about twenty-six miles (approx. 40km) east of Sirmium<sup>1095</sup>. This means that the Sarmatians had participated in the incursions from the very beginning because the invasion had repercussions in regions lying quite far away, at least 350-400 km, from the Quadic lands that the Romans believed to be secure from the barbarians, at least judging from Ammianus' words. For example, we know from Ammianus that Constantius' daughter, and Gratian's bride, happened to be in the area and barely evaded capture by the barbarians.

The location of the counter-forts/ports dated to Valentinian's reign indicates that the *ripa* adjacent to Pannonia Secunda was fortified to a lesser extent than the Valeria section. It is therefore hardly mere chance that the first major raid was launched against Pannonia Secunda (**fig. 292**)<sup>1096</sup>:

After this the Quadi in conjunction with the Sarmatians, extended their ravages further (since both these tribes were addicted beyond measure to plunder and robbery), carrying off, men, women, and cattle, and exulting in the ashes of burnt villas, and in the misery of the murdered inhabitants, whom they fell upon unexpectedly and slaughtered without mercy. [...] Probus, the prefect of the praetorium, who was at that time at Sirmium [...] cleared out the fosses which were choked up with ruins; he repaired the greater portion of the walls which, through the security engendered by a long peace, had been neglected, and had fallen into decay, and raised them again to the height of lofty towers [...] summoning a cohort of archer cavalry from the nearest station, that it might be at hand to resist a siege should any take place<sup>1097</sup>.

<sup>1092</sup> Zosimus IV.16. The main sequence of events corresponds to Ammian's report, although the protagonists differ (Marcellianus in one version, and Celestius in the other).

<sup>1093</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.6.

<sup>1094</sup> Alföldi 1963, 93-94 no. 54.

<sup>1095</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.6.

<sup>1096</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 685; 1963, 96.

<sup>1097</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.8-11.

The measures taken by the prefect testify to the barbarians' intent to lay siege to Sirmium:

[...] the barbarians were forced to abandon their design of besieging the city, since they were not skilful in contests of this kind, and were also hampered by the burden of their booty<sup>1098</sup>.

The barbarian army blocked the road from Sirmium to Cibalae. A small hoard hidden near Lupoglav (Istrian Peninsula, west of Savia) in the summer of 374 demonstrates how far they penetrated into the province. From here they turned north, at least judging from the coin hoards found at Szőkedencs in the Little Balaton region and at Jabling in the southern part of the Burgenland, and the finds brought to light at Pécs, Pécsvárad, Kazsok, Döbrönte and Szőny (fig. 293)<sup>1099</sup>. Tóth believes that the Ságvár fort was destroyed by Sarmatians. The *horreum* was torched and the corpses of the dead lay unburied for many months<sup>1100</sup>. It has recently been suggested that the concealment of the Seuso Treasure can perhaps be linked to the incursions of 374<sup>1101</sup>. Coin hoards have been discovered along the northern *limes* road at Wien-Krottenbach and Öregcsém, suggesting that the Quadi had at some point also crossed the *limes* between Vindobona and Brigetio<sup>1102</sup>. Seeing that their Roman adversaries were reluctant to combine their forces despite the relentless onslaughts, the barbarians did not hesitate to take advantage of the bickering between the Romans:

[...] as they were hastening onwards with impetuous and vengeful speed, they were met by two legions, the Pannonian and the Moesian, both of approved valour, who, if they had acted in harmony, must unquestionably have come off victorious. But while they were hastening onward to attack the barbarians separately, a quarrel arose between them on the subject of their honour and dignity, which impeded all their operations. And when intelligence of this dissension reached the Sarmatians, who are a most sagacious people, they, without waiting for any regular signal of battle, attacked the Moesians first; and while the soldiers, being surprised and in disorder, were slowly making ready their arms, many of them were killed; on which the barbarians with increased confidence attacked the Pannonians, and broke their line also; and when the line of battle was once disordered, they redoubled their efforts, and would have destroyed almost all of them, if some had not saved themselves from the danger of death by a precipitate flight. Amid these calamitous inflictions of adverse fortune, Theodosius the younger, Duke of Moesia [...] in many encounters defeated and vanquished the Free Sarmatians (so called to distinguish them from their rebellious slaves), who had invaded our frontier on the other side, till he exhausted them by his repeated victories; and with such vigour did he crush the assembled crowds combined to resist his arms, that he glutted the very birds and beasts with the blood of the vast numbers justly slain. Those who remained having lost all their pride and spirit, fearing lest a general of such evident promptitude and courage should rout or destroy these invading battalions on the very edge of his frontier, or lay ambushes for them in the recesses of the woods, made from time to time many vain attempts to escape, and at last, discarding all confidence in battle, they begged indulgence and pardon for their

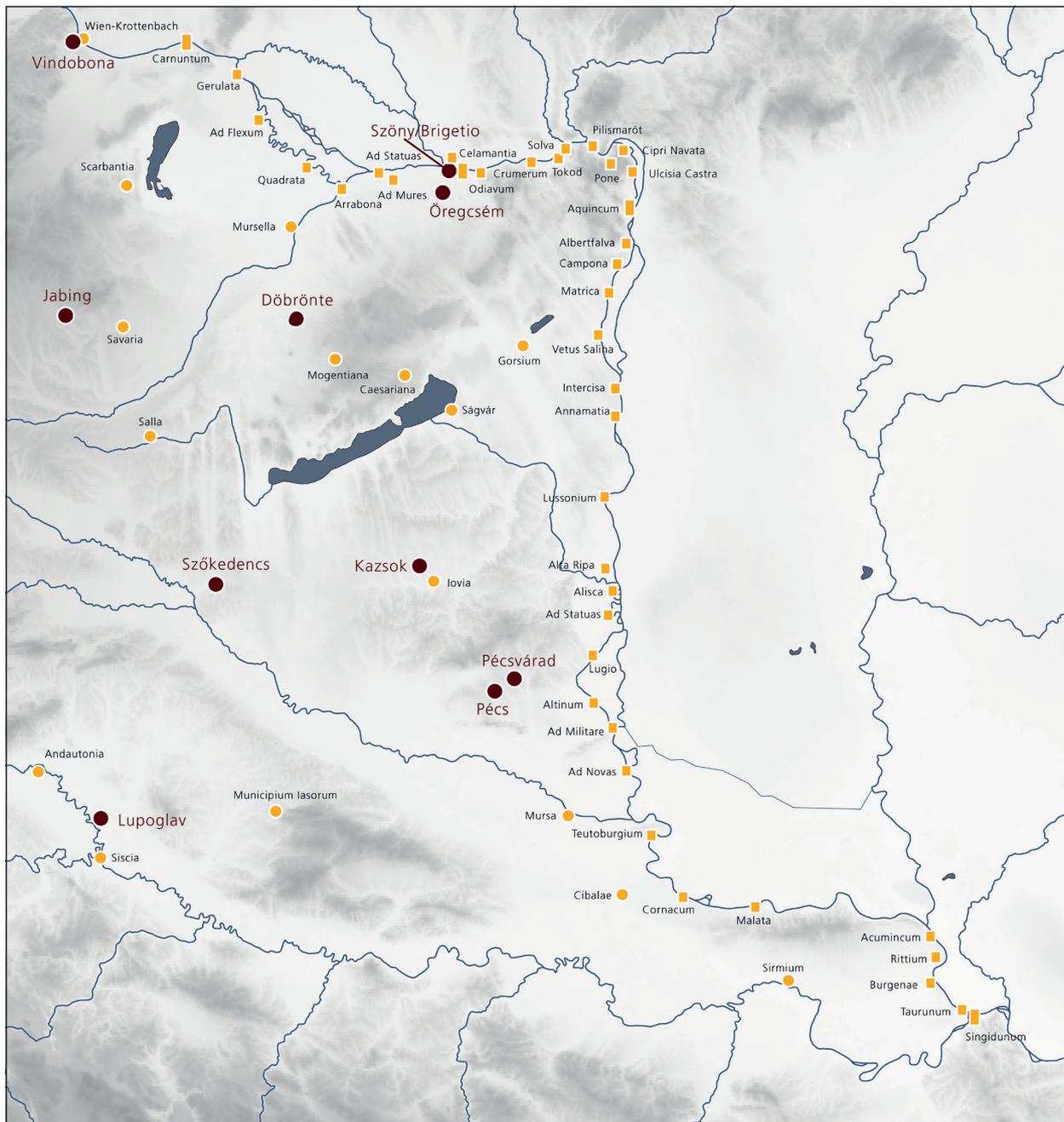
<sup>1098</sup> Ammian XXIX.6.12.

<sup>1099</sup> Alföldi 1963, 96. – Bíróné 1978.

<sup>1100</sup> Tóth 2009, 67.

<sup>1101</sup> Tóth 2002.

<sup>1102</sup> Alföldi 1963, 92. 96. – Radnóti 1942, 15. Considering the chaotic situation painted by the sources, one might reasonably speculate that the concealment of coin hoards should not be exclusively associated with the barbarian incursions. It seems equally likely that some had been hidden owing to the abuses by the Roman army and its soldiers.



**Fig. 293** Hoards concealed around 374 (brown dots). – (Map E. Istvánovits; M. Ober, RGZM).

past hostility. And being thoroughly subdued, they did nothing for some time contrary to the treaty of peace, being more especially terrified because a strong force of Gallic soldiers had come to the defence of Illyricum<sup>1103</sup>. Already teetering, the Empire nevertheless managed to repel the barbarians. The coin hoards from Árpás and Vinkovci, buried at a slightly later date,

1103 Ammian XXIX.6.12-16.

are an indication that peace was not easily restored<sup>1104</sup>. By the time the imperial troops arriving from Gaul reached the front in 375, the barbarians had returned to their lands laden with booty. The coin hoards from Öcsöd<sup>1105</sup> and Hajdúnánás-Tedej<sup>1106</sup> can perhaps be linked to this event. Irrespective of whether the high number of coins reached the Barbaricum as war booty or whether the Sarmatians had acquired the money by some other means, their burial and the fact that they were not retrieved at a later date indicate that there were serious clashes on the Hungarian Plain as well. It is probable that the Roman reprisal affected, not only the Quadic lands, but also Sarmatian territory<sup>1107</sup>.

Zosimus covered the events rather briefly:

Valentinian, roused by the intelligence of these events, marched from Celtica into Illyricum, for the purpose of opposing the Quadi and the Sarmatians, and consigned the command of his forces to Merobaudes, who was a person of the greatest military experience. The winter continuing unusually late, the Quadi sent ambassadors to him with insolent and unbecoming messages. These so exasperated the emperor, that through the violence of his rage, the blood flowed from his head into his mouth, and suffocated him. He thus died after having resided in Illyricum nearly nine months, and after a reign of twelve years<sup>1108</sup>.

Ammianus Marcellinus described what happened at greater length:

At the beginning of the spring Valentinian quitted Treves, and proceeded by rapid marches along the usual high roads. And as he approached the districts to which he was hastening, he was met by ambassadors from the Sarmatians, who threw themselves at his feet, and, with prayers, breathing no wish but for peace, entreated him to be favourable and merciful to them, assuring him that he would not find any of their countrymen implicated in or privy to any evil action. And when they had frequently repeated this assertion, he, after careful deliberation, made answer to them, that these matters must be diligently inquired into by an accurate investigation in the district where they were said to have happened, and if they had happened, then they must be punished. After this, when he had reached Carnuntum, a city of the Illyrians, now indeed in a desolate and ruinous state, but still very convenient for the general of an army, he from thence sallied out whenever either chance or skill afforded him an opportunity; and by the possession of this post in their neighbourhood, he checked the inroads of the barbarians [...] The emperor remained at Carnuntum; and during the three summer months he occupied himself uninterruptedly in preparing arms and magazines [...] intending to take a favourable season for attacking the Quadi, who had lately caused an atrocious disturbance [...] Accordingly,

<sup>1104</sup> Alföldi 1963, 96. It has been suggested that the Árpás hoard had been deposited in 377, indicating yet another barbarian raid (Radnóti 1942, 15).

<sup>1105</sup> Alföldi 1963, 97. 103.

<sup>1106</sup> In his evaluation of the Hajdúnánás-Tedej hoard, resembling the one from Öcsöd regarding its composition and latest coins, Soproni 1966/1967, 116, challenged the idea that the coins had reached the Sarmatians as part of a war booty. However, he did not offer an alternative explanation for their presence.

<sup>1107</sup> The hoards from the Barbaricum and Ammian's report quoted above – according to which the two legions in Pannonia and

Moesia had been routed by the Sarmatians and not the Quadi – challenge Bernát's 2006, 191, view that Valentinian had not been concerned with the Sarmatians' role. It seems more likely that the Romans, as so often before, sought to create a rift between the two peoples and first strove to establish a status quo on the Quadic front. Seeing that our sources are silent on how the war ended, it seems likely that the Sarmatians had been dealt with after the Quadi.

<sup>1108</sup> Zosimus IV.16. – Sozomenos VI.36 described the Sarmatian delegation in his report on the same event.

having sent forward Merobaudes with a strong force of infantry under his command, and Sebastian for his colleague, to ravage the districts of the barbarians with fire and sword, Valentinian speedily moved his camp to Aquincum; and having with great rapidity made a bridge of boats in order to guard against any sudden mishap, he crossed the river in another place and entered the territories of the Quadi, who from their precipitous mountains were watching for his approach; the main body of their nation, in their perplexity and uncertainty of what might happen, had taken refuge with their families in those hills; but were overwhelmed with consternation when they unexpectedly saw the imperial standards in their country. Valentinian advanced with as much rapidity as he could, slaughtering every one of whatever age whom his sudden inroad surprised straggling about the country, and after burning all their dwellings, he returned safe without having experienced the slightest loss. And then, as autumn was now on the wane, he stopped awhile at Aquincum, seeking where best to fix his winter quarters in a region subject to very rigorous frost.

After this event ambassadors arrived from the Quadi, with humble supplications, entreating peace, and oblivion of the past: and that there might be no obstacle to their obtaining this, they promised to furnish a body of recruits, and some other things which would be of use to the Roman state. And after they had been received, and had obtained permission to return with the grant of an armistice which they had solicited (but in truth, our want of supplies and the unfavourable season of the year prevented us from harassing them any longer), they were, by the influence of Equitius, who became security for their good behaviour, admitted into the council-chamber. When introduced they seemed quite overcome by fear, bowing down to the ground; and on being ordered to unfold their message, they urged all the customary pretences and excuses, confirming them by an oath; assuring the council that whatever offence had been committed against any of our people, had not been done by the consent of the nobles of the nation, but only by some foreign banditti who dwelt on the borders of the river; they added further, as a fact quite sufficient to establish the truth of their allegations, that the fortress which had been begun to be built both unjustly and unreasonably, had inflamed the savage temper of those rude men to a great pitch of ferocity. By this speech the emperor was excited to most vehement wrath; and as he began to reply to it he grew more indignant, reproaching the whole nation in bitter language, as unmindful of kindness, and ungrateful. But after a time he became pacified, and inclined to a milder view of the case, when suddenly, as if he had been stricken from heaven, his breathing and his voice ceased, and his countenance appeared blood-shot, and in a moment the blood burst forth, and a deadly sweat broke forth over his whole body [...] and after a severe struggle he expired<sup>1109</sup>.

Valentinian died on 17 November 375. It is unclear how peace and order were eventually restored<sup>1110</sup>. But it cannot be mere chance that the gold coins of Valentinian I and Valens can both be found in the Barbaricum, even if their number is not particularly high<sup>1111</sup>. We know that Sarmatian *coloni* were re-settled in the Mosel Valley under Valentinian, suggesting that the Romans had resorted to *deductio*, their other usual means of pacification<sup>1112</sup>.

<sup>1109</sup> Ammian XXX.5.1-2, 11, 13-14; 6.1-3, 6.

<sup>1110</sup> Alföldi 1942a, 684-685.

<sup>1111</sup> Prohászka 2008, 17. Although few in number, the gold hoards, such as the assemblages from Szügy and Ormód, suggest that the Romans resorted to one of their customary

tactics for pacifying the barbarians of the Carpathian Basin by paying for the peace.

<sup>1112</sup> Auson. *Mosella* 9. Kiss 2008, 20 n. 40, dates this event to the reign of Valentinian.

Recent research suggests that large-scale construction activities began in Pannonia following the end of the war. The walls of the forts at Alsóhetény, Ságvár and Fenékpusztá, which ensured the supply of the military (bread baking, butchery, smithing), were reinforced and rebuilt with round towers having a diameter of 14-15 m. Tóth estimated that over 128.5 m<sup>3</sup> of stone (corresponding to over three thousand wagon loads) had to be quarried and transported for erecting the towers alone. It seems that the 374-375 war had driven the point home: the Roman military leadership finally realised that the barbarian incursions meant an ever-increasing threat<sup>1113</sup>.

### **Wars in the Last Third of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD**

Contact between the Iranian and Turkic peoples began when the former first appeared in the Altaj region. Despite the scant literary evidence, the similarities in the mythological traditions of the nomadic tribes of the steppe furnish ample proof for the encounters between them<sup>1114</sup>. The earliest contact between the Alans and the Huns occurred sometime around the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, or in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD at the latest, in Inner and Central Asia. The history of the two peoples became intertwined because the Alans' sway extended from the Lower Danube region to Inner Asia. Relations between them became remarkably close following the Huns' appearance in Europe. The Huns apparently acted in concert with the Alans, even if the latter, the true overlords of the steppe, were the dominant power. One of the last occasions when the two peoples joined forces was a campaign in the 330s led by the Alanic King Sanēsan. His army included Hunnic troops, which swooped down on Armenia, but were eventually defeated<sup>1115</sup>.

The significance of this campaign is that it indicates that an abrupt change, the Hunnic subjugation of the Alans, had occurred sometime after the 330s. By 375, the Huns had gained the upper hand. They ruled the region of the Ural River in the east, the Caucasus in the south, the Don region in the west and the region bordered by the Ural Mountains in the north. However, the new political constellation hardly meant that the Alans disappeared from history because they were the Huns' principal allies in the campaigns led by the Huns during the next three decades. The Huns would have been unable to defeat Hermanarich's Gothic kingdom without them<sup>1116</sup>. The reconfiguration of power on the steppe brought a change in the relation between the Roman Empire and the peoples living between the Huns and the Imperium. The Huns – and their Alan allies – crossed the Don, the border between Europe and Asia<sup>1117</sup>.

Our principal sources for this period are Ammianus Marcellinus and Jordanes. Ammianus' text, based on earlier geographic descriptions by Herodotus, Ptolemy and Pomponius Mela, is unreliable and controversial, giving rise to many debates. At the same time, there can be no doubt about Jordanes' obvious bias in favour of the Goths and his animosity towards the Alans<sup>1118</sup>. What can be sifted out with certainty from the contradictory data from the period before 376 is that:

[...] the Huns, after having traversed the territories of the Alani, and especially of that tribe of them who border on the Greuthungi [Ostrogoths], and who are called Tanaitae, and having slain many of them and acquired much plunder, they made a treaty of friendship and alliance

1113 Tóth 2009, esp. 71. 77.

1114 Suffice it here to mention, e. g. the tradition of Attila's Sword and the Golden Stag.

1115 Faust. Byz. 3.7 (Alemány 2000, 292). Cf. Szász 1994, 100-101, who proposes a different chronology.

1116 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 22. – Szász 1994, 100-101. See the next chapter for more details.

1117 This event took place in 373 or, more likely, in 374, although the most widely accepted date is 375 (Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 20; Szász 1994, 110).

1118 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 18-25.

with those who remained. And when they had united them to themselves, with increased boldness they made a sudden incursion into the extensive and fertile districts of Ermenrichus, a very warlike prince, and one whom his numerous gallant actions of every kind had rendered formidable to all the neighbouring nations. He was astonished at the violence of this sudden tempest, and although, like a prince whose power was well established he long attempted to hold his ground, he was at last overpowered by a dread of the evils impending over his country, which were exaggerated by common report, till he terminated his fear of great danger by a voluntary death<sup>1119</sup>.

According to Ammianus, Ermanarich/Hermanarich was succeeded by Vithimir, who:

[...] for some time maintained a resistance to the Alani, relying on the aid of other tribes of the Huns, whom by large promises of pay he had won over to his party; but, after having suffered many losses, he was defeated by superior numbers and slain in battle<sup>1120</sup>.

The Alans' role in defeating the Goths is confirmed by a passage in the exegesis to the Testament of Luke written by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, according to which:

The Huns threw themselves upon the Alans, the Alans upon the Goths, and the Goths upon the Taifali and Sarmatae; the Goths exiled from their own country, made us exiles in Illyricum, and the end is not yet<sup>1121</sup>.

Maenchen-Helfen speculated whether the Alans contributing to Ermanarich/Hermanarich's downfall were the allies of the Huns. He concluded that this was probably the case, even though a passage in Jordanes raises the possibility that there had been Alans who were the subjects of the Goths<sup>1122</sup>:

When the Getae beheld this active race that had invaded many nations, they took fright and consulted with their king how they might escape from such a foe. Now although Hermanaric, king of the Goths, was the conqueror of many tribes, as we have said above, yet while he was deliberating on this invasion of the Huns, the treacherous tribe of the Rosomoni, who at that time were among those who owed him their homage, took this chance to catch him unawares. For when the king had given orders that a certain woman of the tribe I have mentioned, Sunilda by name, should be bound to wild horses and torn apart by driving them at full speed in opposite directions (for he was roused to fury by her husband's treachery to him), her brothers Sarus and Ammius came to avenge their sister's death and plunged a sword into Hermanaric's side. Enfeebled by this blow, he dragged out a miserable existence in bodily weakness. Balamber, king of the Huns, took advantage of his ill health to move an army into the country of the Ostrogoths, from whom the Visigoths had already separated because of some dispute. Meanwhile Hermanaric, who was unable to endure either the pain of his wound or the inroads of the Huns, died full of days at the great age of one hundred and ten years. The fact of his death enabled the Huns to prevail over those Goths who, as we have said, dwelt in the East and were called Ostrogoths<sup>1123</sup>.

1119 Ammian XXXI.3.1-2.

1120 Ammian XXXI.3.3.

1121 Ambrosius X.10, quoted after Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 33.

1122 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 21-22.

1123 Jordan XXIV.129-130.

While it has been proposed that the Rosomoni mentioned in this passage can perhaps be identified with the Roxolani, most scholars reject this identification. In contrast, there is a consensus that the name Sarus is a variant of Sarosius or Saroes, the name of the ruler of the Caucasian Alans around 500, being an obvious derivative of the ethnonym »Sarmatian«<sup>1124</sup>.

Returning to the main narrative of the events, the Huns vanquished Hermanarich's army with relative ease and continued their advance towards the Danube. Following the defeat and the political intrigues in its wake, a part of the Ostrogoths led by Alatheus and Saphrac fled to their western Gothic brethren, while another part remained in the Pontic and submitted to the Huns together with Hunimund, their king<sup>1125</sup>.

The Hunnic tide reached the Visigoths in 376. Led by Fritigern, one part of the Visigothic population and the Ostrogoths who had fled to them, sought admittance into the Roman Empire, while Athanarich, known for his enmity towards Rome, attempted to stave off the Hunnic advance at the Siret, but was forced to retreat to the lands neighbouring the Sarmatian territory on the Hungarian Plain<sup>1126</sup>. The Alans regularly crop up among the peoples joining up with both the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths<sup>1127</sup>.

Valens, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, granted entry to the barbarian population made up of Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Alans and Huns seeking admittance. The mistreatment of the barbarians by the officials supervising the *receptio* provoked a clash between the Romans and the famished horde seeking a new homeland. Until the end of 377, the barbarians devastated the imperial lands between the Danube and Constantinople, prompting Valens to return from the Persian front to deal with them. He did not wait for the arrival of Gratian, his co-emperor in the west, which was to have fatal consequences. On 9 August 378, two-thirds of the Roman army perished at the Battle of Adrianople (Edirne), Valens among them<sup>1128</sup>.

The conduct of Gratian, Emperor of the Western Roman Empire, is quite noteworthy in this context. He set off with reinforcements in response to Valens' appeal in summer 378, crossing the Danube he reached Bononia (Banoštor) and Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), from where he went to Castra Martis (Kula), without any apparent fear of a Quadic or Sarmatian attack in the Middle Danube region. Ammianus reported that the Alans attacked the emperor and his retinue at Castra Martis. This attack could not have been a serious affair because the emperor »lost a few of his followers«<sup>1129</sup>. It was a minor skirmish at the most, which would hardly have prompted the emperor to return to Sirmium. In the meantime, around June or July of 378 the situation could suddenly change. Gratian probably turned back from Castra Martis because of the incursions into Valeria. We know of at least one Sarmatian campaign in this year<sup>1130</sup>. It is unclear whether the Western Roman Emperor hastening to Sirmium had learnt about Valens' death by this time, one of the gravest consequences of the catastrophe at Adrianople. The loss of Pannonia and all of Illyricum, which became a *topos* in the public mind by the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, can probably be linked to the Sarmatian campaigns described above<sup>1131</sup>.

On 17 November 379, a year after Valens' death, a victory scored over the Goths, Alans and Huns was reported in Constantinople<sup>1132</sup>. Kovács has aptly pointed out that it is far from certain that this victorious battle was won in Pannonia or that the enemy was a Gothic-Alanic-Hunnic alliance. It is equally possible that these

1124 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 21-22. The Sarmatian/Alanic origin of the legendary Sarus seems likely despite the fact that this has been challenged in view of the similarity with the name of the Gothic king living around 400 (Wolfram 2001, 45).

1125 Váczy 1940, 66-68.

1126 Váczy 1940, 68.

1127 Alemany 2000, 41-42.

1128 Váczy 1940, 70-71.

1129 Ammian XXXI.11.6.

1130 Nagy 1971, 310-311. 315. – Kovács 2004, 133. It is possible that the events were triggered by Athanarich's westward move, which probably affected the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain.

1131 For a detailed discussion, see Kovács 2004, 140.

1132 Chron. Min. I. 243, II.14, 60. – Orosius *Adv. Pag.* VII.34.5. – Mócsy 1974, 340.

peoples had launched their attack separately<sup>1133</sup>. Mócsy assumed that direct Hunnic pressure solely affected the lower reaches of the Danube. Even though the Sarmatians' situation became slightly more consolidated in the Middle Danube region by the 380s following the mass exodus of the Goths<sup>1134</sup>, a new Sarmatian incursion is reported from 383-384. Ausonius mentioned that Huns had joined the raids led by various barbarian peoples, the Sarmatians amongst them, from the 380s onward »the wandering bands of Huns had made alliance with the Sarmatian« and »the Getae with their Alan friends used to attack the Danube«<sup>1135</sup>. It is uncertain whether the joint incursion can be interpreted as the Huns' control over the Hungarian Plain or merely a spontaneous alliance between changing barbarian groups, in this case, between the Huns and the Sarmatians.

### The Rule of the Huns on the Hungarian Plain

While the Hunnic occupation of Pannonia is a recurring, vigorously debated subject in Roman research, the Hunnic subjugation of the Hungarian Plain – and the Sarmatian territories – is a neglected issue, usually relegated to a footnote. One of the still unresolved problems in research into this period is when the Hungarian Plain came under Hunnic rule. A detailed discussion of the abandonment of Pannonia falls outside the scope of this study. According to the traditional view, Valeria was relinquished to the Huns in accordance with the terms of a treaty concluded in 406 (Alföldi) or 409 (Nagy). Pannonia Prima was ceded next, in 431 (Seeck) or 433 (Alföldi). This issue was recently re-examined by Tóth in the light of recent archaeological evidence. He pointed out that there was no continuity in the toponyms in eastern Transdanubia and that the population leaving the province took along a part of its dead from the Alsóhetény mausoleum. Even though the Cella Septichora in Pécs had been completed, there were no burials inside it. This tallies with the evidence provided by the *Notitia Dignitatum*, from which the data referring to the civil administration of Valeria had been deleted, and with the fact that there were plans to create a new province called Valeria Media. While the Romans had, to all appearances, evacuated the province in haste, they had done so in an orderly manner before handing the territory over to the Huns as part of a treaty concluded in the late 430s. This hypothesis is confirmed by the appearance of *solidi*, in particular of the Ravenna issues of the pretender Johannes minted in 423-425, which Tóth associated with the Huns who supported the pretender on Aëtius' request. In Tóth's view, the late variants of pottery wares with smoothed decoration (figs 294-295) found in Transdanubia suggest that the Sarmatians of the Hungarian Plain had also participated in the territory's occupation<sup>1136</sup>. The Hunnic occupation of the Hungarian Plain had obviously taken place before the provinces were relinquished. Maenchen-Helfen contended that the Huns had advanced as far as the Hungarian Plain under Uldin because there was no serious force in the late 370s that could have stopped them. Considering the Huns' intensive activities in the Lower Danube region and the fact that the Goths had left Transylvania, as well as the fact that the Huns' principal allies for the previous three decades had been the Alans, brethren of the Sarmatians, we may agree with Maenchen-Helfen that the Hungarian Plain had come under the authority of the Huns and their Alan allies by the 380s<sup>1137</sup>. The last recorded Sarmatian raid against Pannonia in 383-384 also supports this scenario. Despite the growing absence of written sources, it is quite obvious that

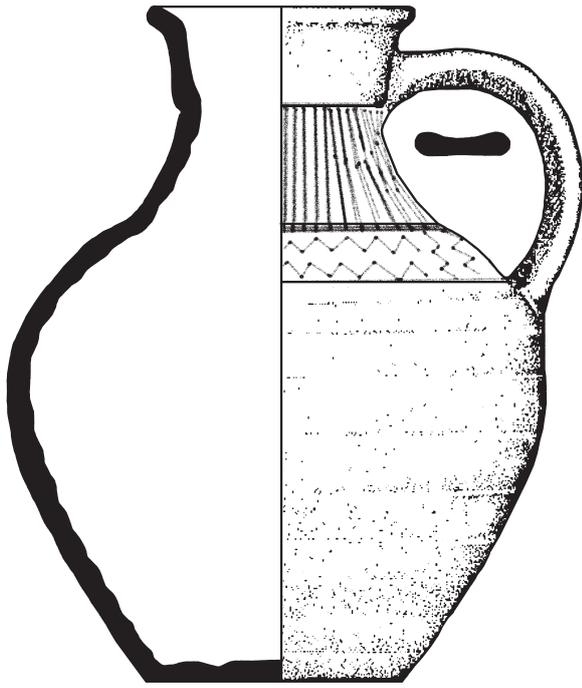
<sup>1133</sup> Kovács 2004, 136.

<sup>1134</sup> Mócsy 1974, 342. – Kovács 2004, 137.

<sup>1135</sup> For a discussion and critical review of the events of the 380s and their sources, see Kovács 2004, 133-134. – Auson. *precat. cos.* VI.28-35.

<sup>1136</sup> Tóth 2009, esp. 113-114. 159-189, with the earlier literature. For a detailed discussion of pottery with smoothed decoration, see Ottományi 1981. – M. Kiss 1994, 254.

<sup>1137</sup> Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 43. – Cf. Thompson 2002, 33.



**Fig. 294** Jug with smoothed decoration from the Ságvár III cemetery. The appearance of late variants of pottery with smoothed decoration in Pannonia is regarded as proof of the Sarmatians' presence. – (After Tóth 2005b, fig. 11).

Sarmatian pressure on the *limes* suddenly dissipated in the last third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, no doubt reflecting a shift in the balance of power on the Hungarian Plain, again confirming Maenchen-Helfen's reconstruction. Citing Ausonius' passage quoted above, Kulakovskij dated the Hunnic invasion to the year 378<sup>1138</sup>.

The rapid integration of the earlier Sarmatian population of the Hungarian Plain was no doubt facilitated by linguistic kinship with the Alans. The militant nature of the Hungarian Plain's new overlords could hardly be doubted and their army was provisioned with the various goods produced by the subjugated peoples. Whilst the population of the Hungarian Plain no doubt played an important role in supplying their new masters with grain, their vanquishers also exploited the talents of their craftsmen and most likely took their share of the livestock (fig. 296). The massacre of the local population would hardly have served the Huns' interest. The archaeological record and the written sources both indicate an unusually high population density on the Hungarian Plain from

the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century onward, reflected also by the sudden increase of Sarmatian finds during the same period. The enormous demographic peak in the Sarmatian population of the Hungarian Plain can be explained by the successive inflow of population groups fleeing the Huns' westward advance after the evacuation of Dacia. There are virtually no excavations on the Hungarian Plain whose finds do not include relics of the huge Sarmatian population, most of which can be dated to this period<sup>1139</sup>. The written sources reported a huge population in the Danube Valley even after the re-settlement of a hundred thousand Sarmatians (or, according to bolder estimates, some three hundred thousand, although this seems less likely)<sup>1140</sup>.

Perhaps we are not mistaken in assuming that with the appearance of their Alanic brethren, the Iranian speaking population previously harangued by the Goths and Romans found itself in a considerably more favourable situation by submitting to the Huns. Under Hunnic administration, warriors could partake in further campaigns and the archaeological finds reflect a flourishing rural life, rather than a declining one, probably as a result of a new market<sup>1141</sup>.

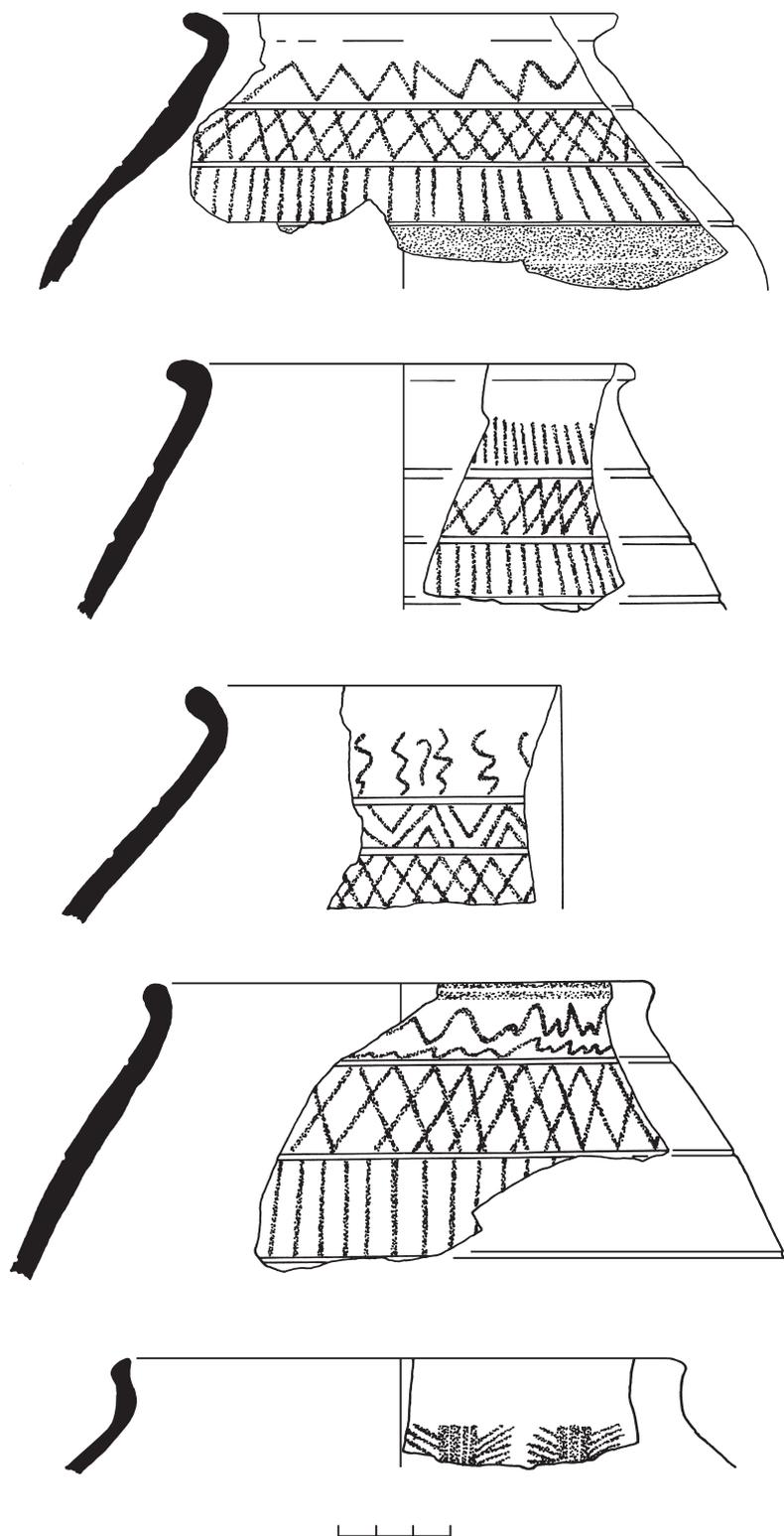
The excavations suggest that the overwhelming majority of the population on the Hungarian Plain remained in its homeland. However, this issue can only be conclusively settled by a detailed assessment of the ar-

<sup>1138</sup> Kulakovskij 2000, 83-84. – Cf. Mócsy 1974, 342. – Kovács 2004, 137.

<sup>1139</sup> The rise in the number of finds is reflected by Párducz's catalogues of Sarmatian finds (Párducz 1941a; 1944; 1950a). Even though his works reflect the state of Sarmatian research over 50 years ago, the tendency reflected by his catalogue has remained unchanged: the finds from the Early Roman period are a fraction of the assemblages dated to later ages.

<sup>1140</sup> Ammianus' description of the Sarmatian civil war quoted and discussed in the above (Ammian XVII.12-13) suggests the migration of a sizeable population.

<sup>1141</sup> Vaday 1989b, 209, also believed that the new political power brought a positive change in the life of the Sarmatians living on the Hungarian Plain compared to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, reflected also by the appearance of Roman wares from the east. In her view, the new, strongly mixed population ensured a steady supply of agricultural and other goods for the Huns, as well as new recruits for the military.



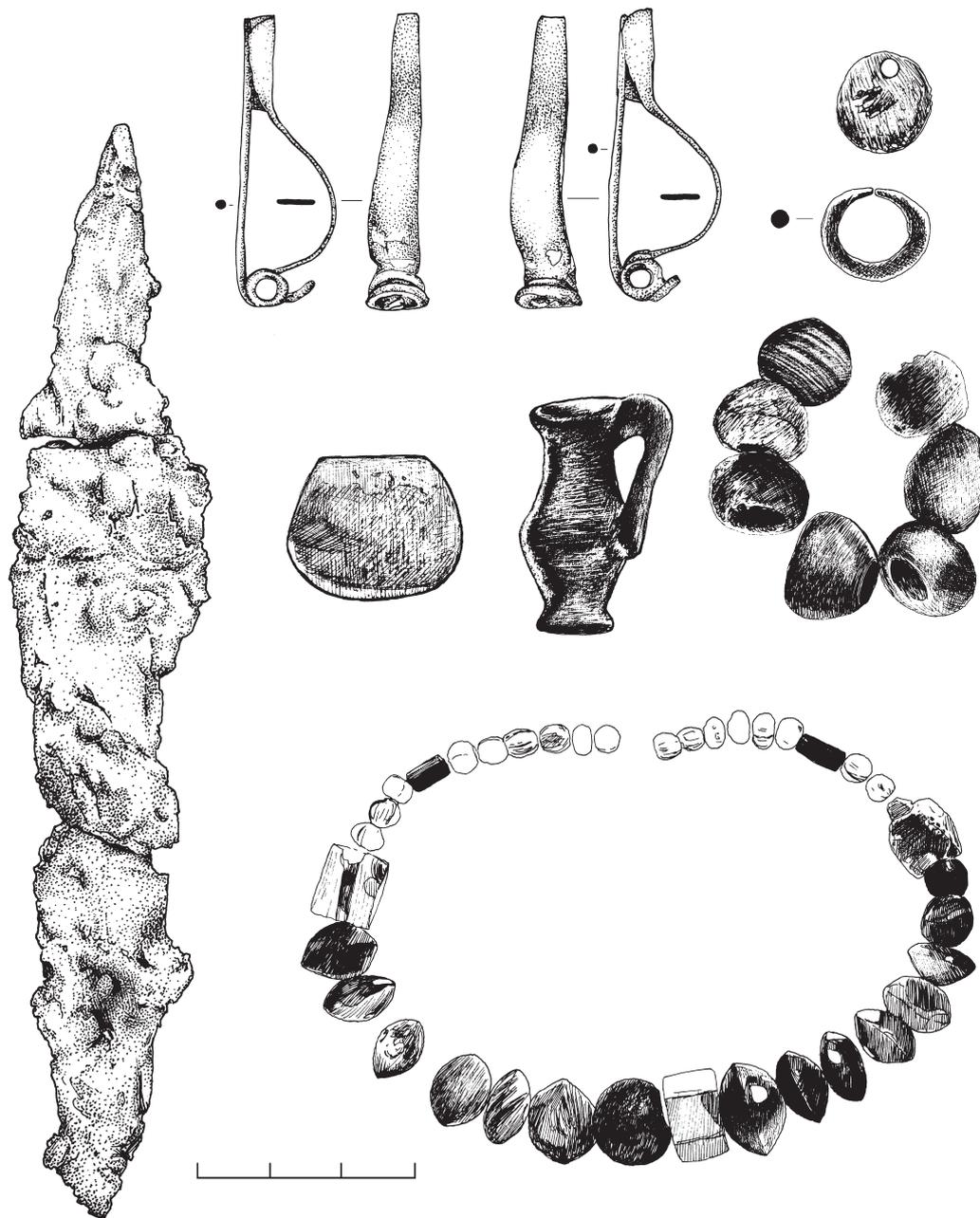
**Fig. 295** Characteristic pieces of the late group of pottery with smoothed decoration from the pottery workshop found at Pilismarót-Malompatak. – (After Ottományi 1996, fig. 12).

archaeological finds because there are no contemporary literary references. Precisely dating the archaeological material to within a decade is impossible with currently available techniques. Irrespective of exactly when the Huns occupied the Hungarian Plain, the Sarmatian finds did not disappear and a Sarmatian presence can be demonstrated into the 5<sup>th</sup> century (figs 269. 297). There are no destruction levels on the settlements



**Fig. 296** Remains of smoke-house, houses, refuse pit with kitchen waste from Üllő, Site 9 and Ecsér, Site 7. – (Excavation and photo of V. Kulcsár and team).

established in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries, although the exact date of their abandonment remains uncertain because datable Roman imports become extremely scarce. The finds reflect the long survival of the settlements and a dense settlement network. The archaeological sites in the Banat likewise indicate the survival of the Sarmatians, as shown by the south to north orientated grave of a woman laid to rest in a bead-embroidered

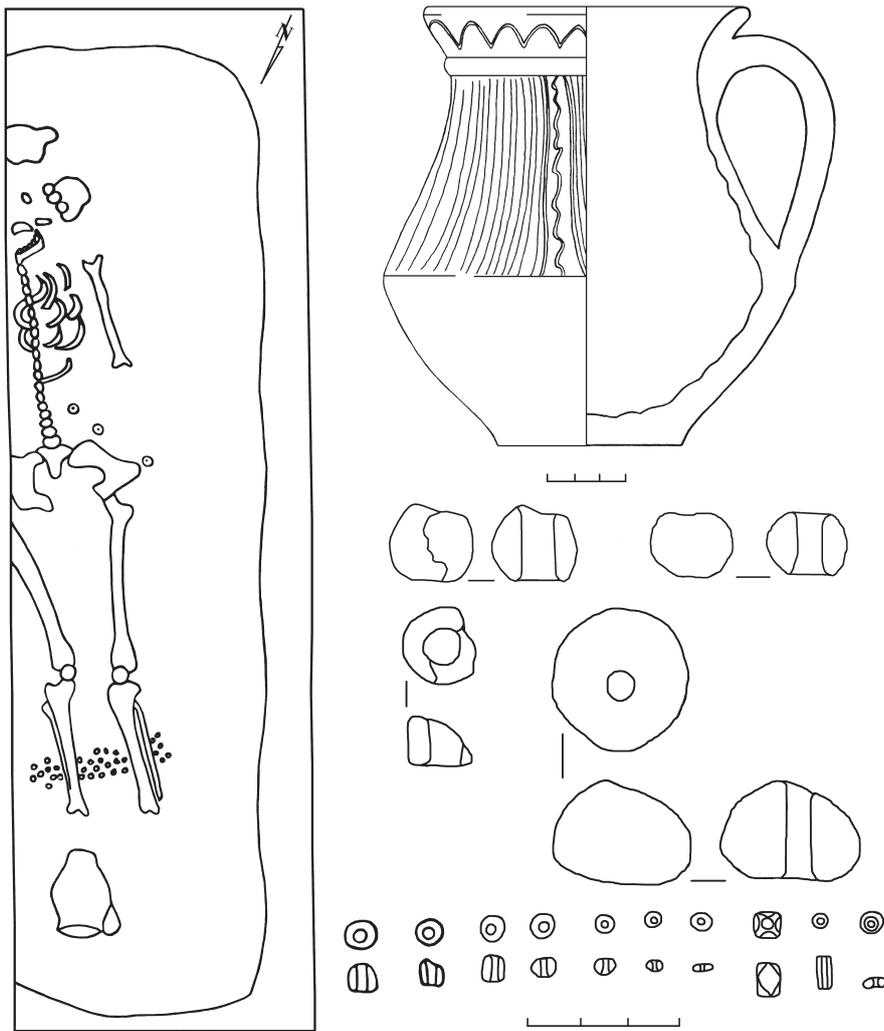


**Fig. 297** A  
4<sup>th</sup> century coin  
was found in the  
burial at Csongrád-  
Iskola utca. The  
coin gives only  
a *terminus post  
quem*. – (After  
Istvánovits/Kulcsár  
1994b, fig. 1).

costume, whose burial contained a vessel with smoothed decoration dating to the late 4<sup>th</sup>-early 5<sup>th</sup> century, and the child burial without any grave goods uncovered at Dudești Vechi in County Timiș (fig. 298)<sup>1142</sup>. Even though the existence of a Hunnic centre in the Tisza region is first recorded in the report on Priscus' embassy in 448, it was probably founded earlier, immediately after the occupation of the Hungarian Plain, or perhaps even before that<sup>1143</sup>. The shifts in the Sarmatian settlement network in the Böldi rév area (the

<sup>1142</sup> Tănase 2002/2003. This scenario should not be neglected, especially in view of the fact that the site lies close to the broader Szeged area where the Huns' centre on the Hungarian Plain should be sought in the light of Priscus' description.

<sup>1143</sup> Judging from the movement of the Hunnic troops, the Hun *ordu* probably lay in the Tisza-Maros-Körös region by the late 420s (Bóna 2001, 181).

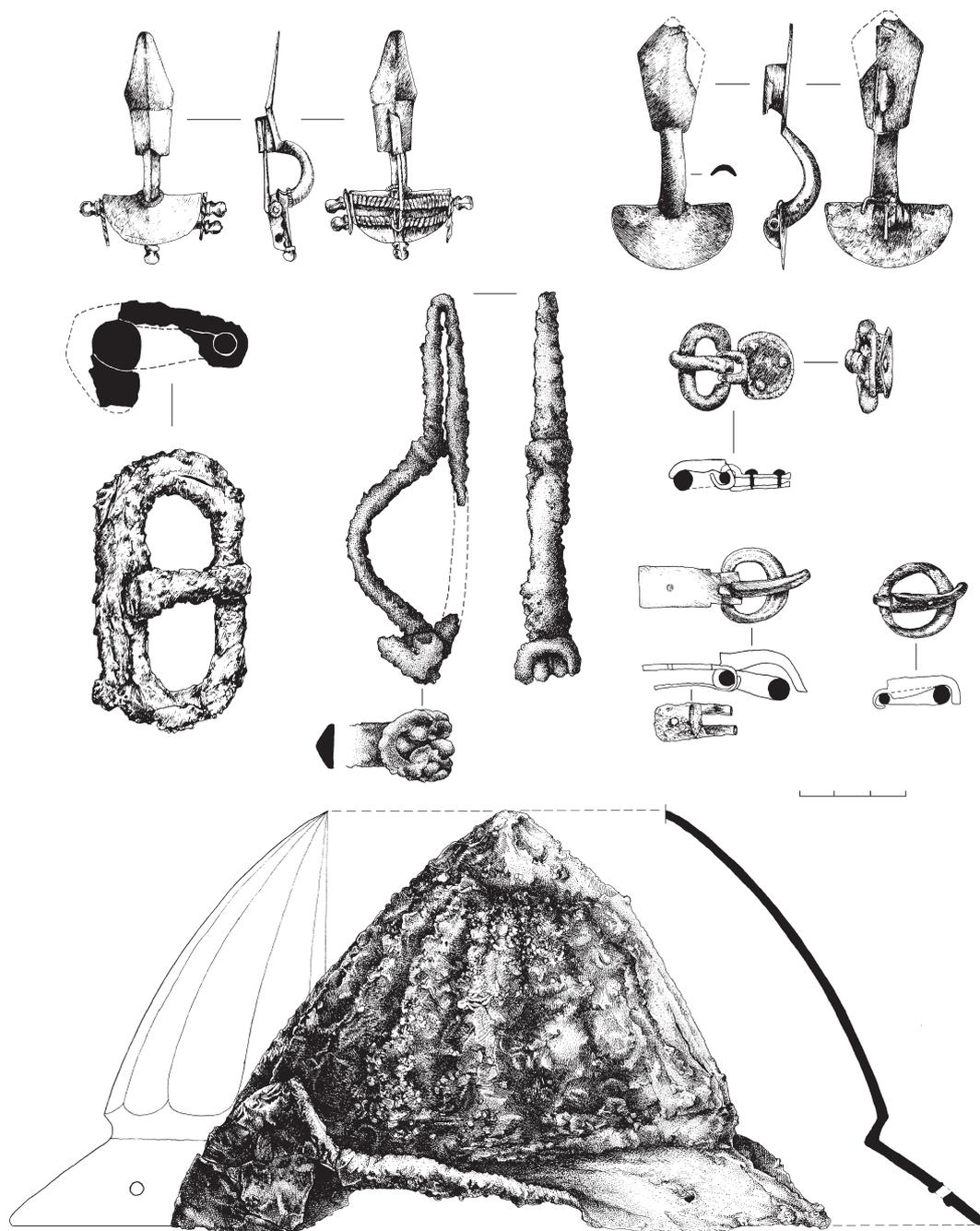


**Fig. 298** Burial from the 5<sup>th</sup> century at Dudești Vechi (County Timiș). – (After Tănase 2002/2003).

crossing point at the confluence of the Tisza and the Kurca rivers near Csongrád) are most likely an indication of the changes. The archaeological finds indicated a dense occupation along both banks of the Tisza in the preceding period. The shift occurred in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries: while the overall number of sites increased on the right bank (in the Csongrád area), there was a visible decline in the number of settlements on the left bank (in the Szentes area). It would appear that the population created a defence line and retreated behind the river, choosing a location where the passage through the marshy, impenetrable area could be easily controlled. The relocation probably involved a sizeable population, judging from the well investigated area. By 1992, six settlements and six cemeteries dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century were known in the Csongrád area, and five cemeteries from the same period in the Szentes area. The sites in the latter area were abandoned in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, while eighteen settlements and seventeen burial grounds of the same period have been identified in the Csongrád area<sup>1144</sup>.

<sup>1144</sup> Vörös 1992, 6. The difficulties in dating must be borne in mind together with the problem of separating the two periods. If these and similar data can be reliably confirmed, Sarmatian

studies can also contribute to the location of Attila's *ordu* after 445 and the identification of his burial place.

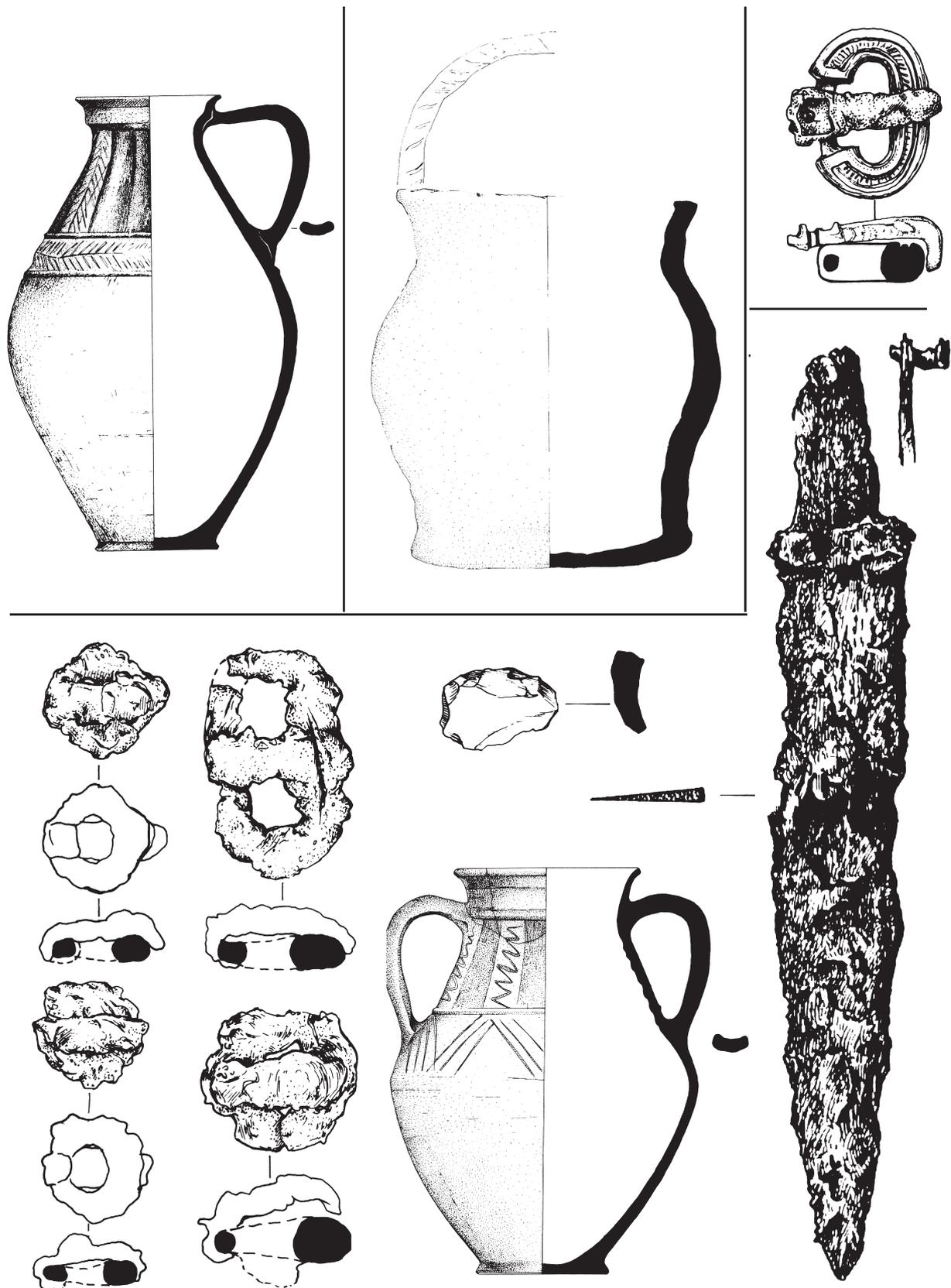


**Fig. 299** The increasingly uniform, »international« fashion is reflected in the burials of Tiszadob-Sziget, the type site of the Tiszadob group. – (After Istvánovits 1993a).

At the same time, a radical change can be noted in the Sarmatian material of the Hungarian Plain in the last third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. New cemeteries were opened whose burial rite and finds differ from the earlier material culture of the Hungarian Plain. The extent of the differences varies.

The Tiszadob group represents the circle of relatively newly-opened burial grounds (fig. 299)<sup>1145</sup>: 153 graves in five cemeteries in north-eastern Hungary can be currently assigned to this group. In many cases, the grave goods, such as the small double-plate brooches and buckles with thickened ring and prong coping over the

<sup>1145</sup> Istvánovits 1993a; 1998; 2000.



**Fig. 300** Selection from the finds of Ártánd-Nagyfarkasdomb. The ethnic attribution of the finds from the early 5<sup>th</sup> century runs into serious difficulties. The cemetery investigated at Ártánd was used by a multi-ethnic community. – (Déri Museum, Debrecen; I. M. Nepper's and K. Mesterházy's excavation; drawing Zs. Benke).

ring, share many resemblances with similar artefacts of the Maroszentanna/Sântana de Mureş-Černjahov culture. However, these similarities can probably be explained by the period's increasingly uniform international fashion. The burial rite – the south to north orientation (and, rarely, its reverse), the large, wide grave pits, the timbered coffins and the use of funerary shrouds – suggests a Sarmatian rather than a Germanic ethnic background, indicating the presence of a multicultural population in the region instead of a uniform ethnic group.

The same holds true for the Ártánd group in the Berettyó Valley lying farther to the south, the only difference being that in contrast to the Tiszadob group, dominated by Iranian elements, the Ártánd group is characterised by overwhelmingly Germanic traits, such as north to south orientated burials, the deposition of combs and several vessels in the grave, and the placement of a vessel by the head, although Iranian features can also be noted (south to north orientation, beads in the region of the feet and the remains of fire in the grave pit) (fig. 300). It would appear that a Germanic group arrived in the Ártánd area, south-east of the Tiszadob territory sometime at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Tiszadob group has much in common with the Tápé-Malajdok cemetery and similar burial grounds, lying considerably farther to the south<sup>1146</sup>. The burial rite conforms to the general Sarmatian practice of south to north orientated graves, coffin use, bead embroidered costumes and a vessel placed by the feet. At the same time, a number of uncommon elements also make their appearance, such as two lances and two buckles (one probably used for fastening the weapon belt) in one grave, a mount-decorated belt and long knives (possibly intended as weapons). A close relation can be noted between Grave 5 of the Tiszadob cemetery and Grave 32 of the Tápé-Malajdok cemetery (fig. 301). The many similarities between the two burial grounds perhaps reflect a northward migration from the south: the Tápé-Malajdok cemetery in the southern Hungarian Plain was established earlier than the burial grounds of the Tiszadob type.

Mention must be made of the so-called Csongrád group (fig. 302)<sup>1147</sup>, which has fewer links with the archaeological assemblages of the preceding period than the finds from the cemeteries discussed above. While typical Late Sarmatian traits can be discerned in the burials and especially in the burial rite, various elements of the Hun period make an appearance: pottery with smoothed and fluted decoration; chip-carved (*Kerbschnitt*) buckle; and Levice/Prša type brooches. Some of these, such as the so-called Maeotian swords, croissant-shaped pendants, arrowheads for use with Hunnic bows and the practice of skull deformation, were recent arrivals from the east. A number of Germanic features can also be distinguished, such as the custom of folding swords and the use of shields, bone combs and bone needle-cases, indicating a blend between the earlier population of the southern Hungarian Plain and the groups arriving from the east<sup>1148</sup>.

Many burial grounds across the Hungarian Plain remained in use. One of the largest among them was excavated at Madaras-Halmok<sup>1149</sup>. The cemetery at Sándorfalva-Eperjes (figs 303-304) was used by a small community of warriors from the earlier population of the Hungarian Plain, or perhaps by several groups who had entered armed service<sup>1150</sup>.

The late 4<sup>th</sup> century material from the Hungarian Plain is more colourful and diverse than that of earlier periods. The cultural connections lead to many different regions, reflecting the multitude of peoples fleeing the Huns (fig. 305). Considering that four Hunnic groups are mentioned during the reign of Uldin<sup>1151</sup>,

<sup>1146</sup> This should not be confused with the Tápé-Malajdok group distinguished by Párducz, which is no longer regarded as a separate group.

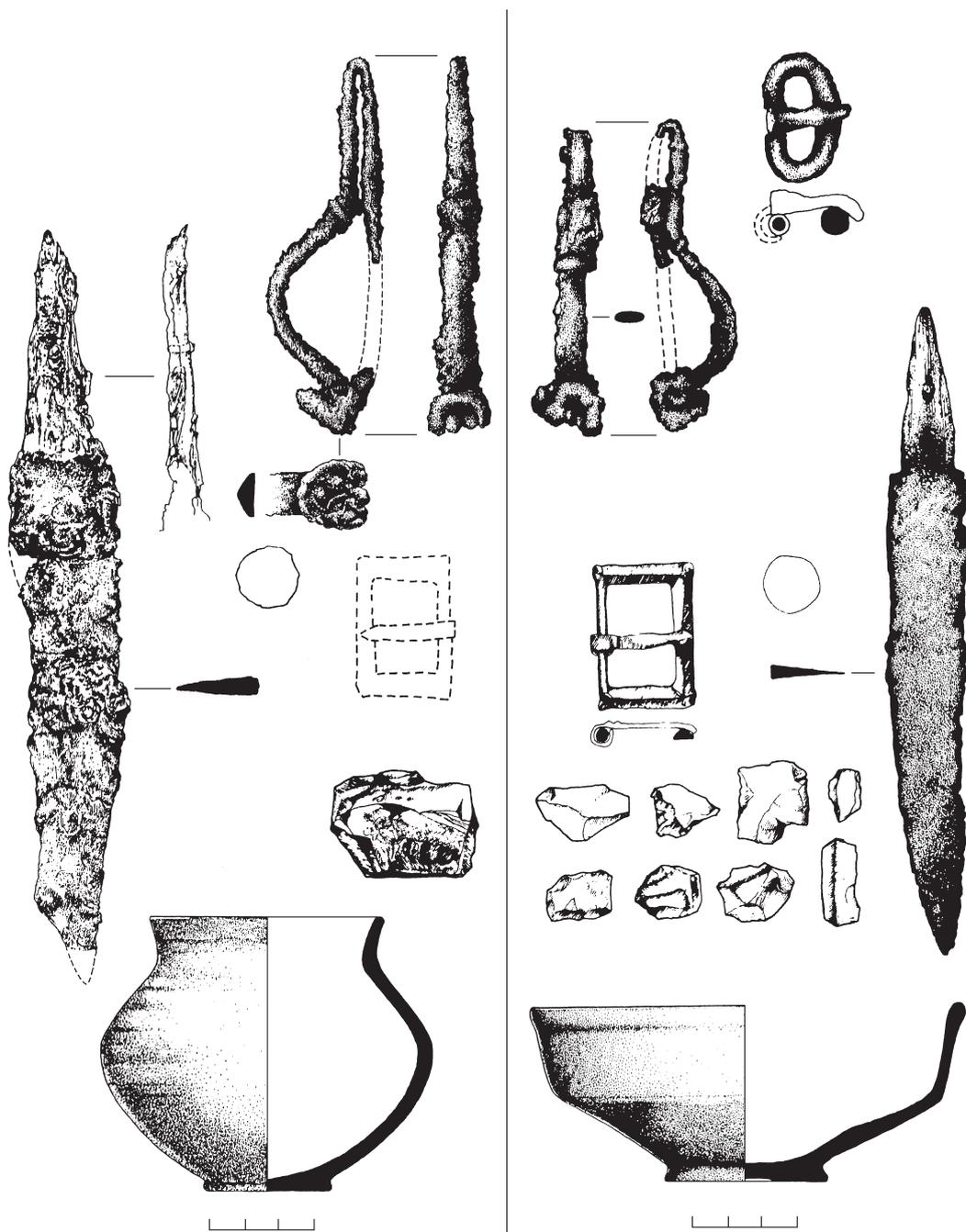
<sup>1147</sup> Párducz/Korek 1946/1948. – Párducz 1959; 1963. The site published as Kenderföldék is identical with the one quoted as Laktanya/Kaserne (Military Barracks).

<sup>1148</sup> For an overview of the Tiszadob and Csongrád groups, and the cemeteries of the Tápé-Malajdok type, see Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1999.

<sup>1149</sup> Kőhegyi/Vörös 2011.

<sup>1150</sup> Vörös 1982/1983.

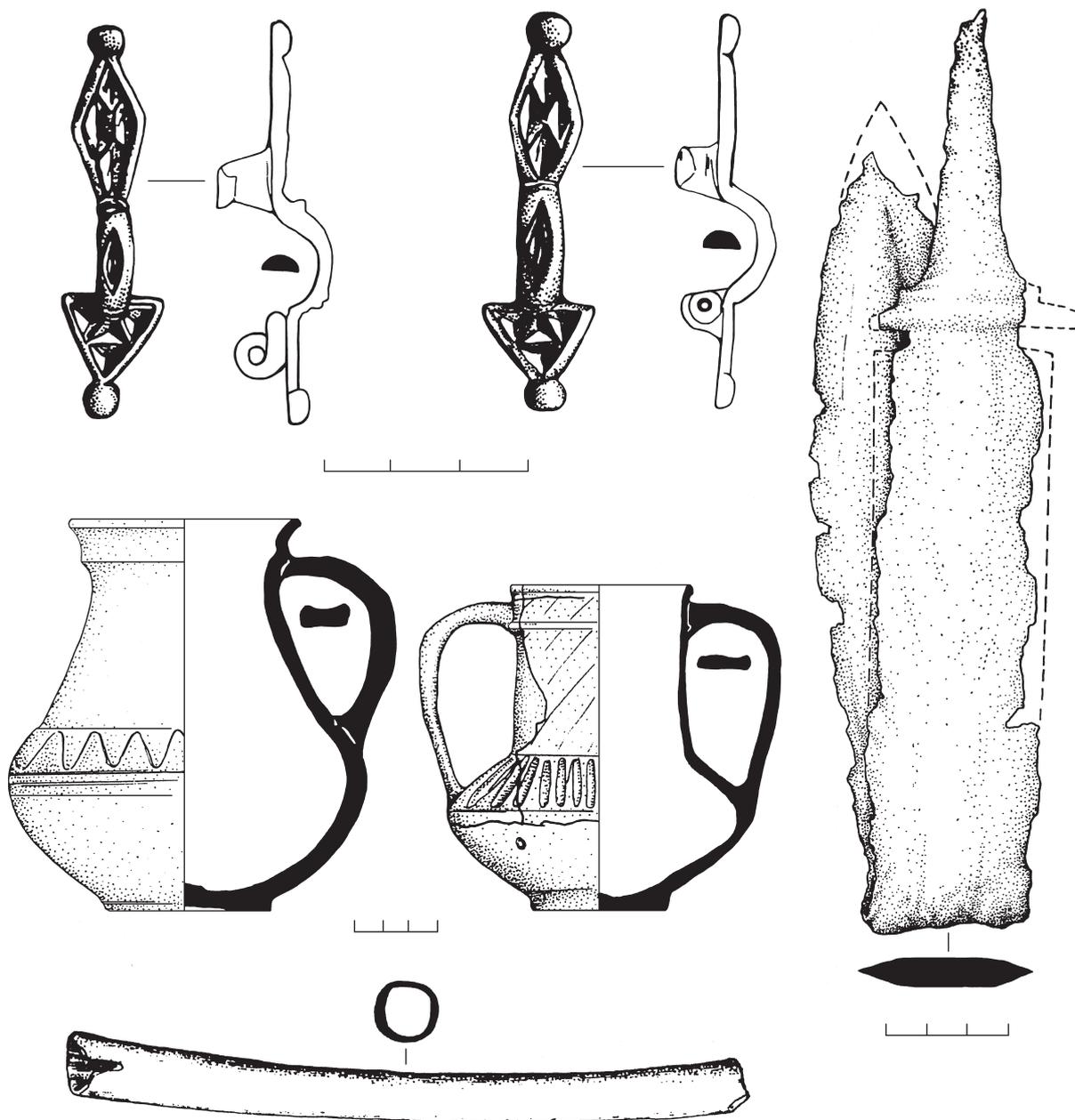
<sup>1151</sup> Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 71.



**Fig. 301** Grave 5 of the Tiszadob cemetery in the Upper Tisza region and Grave 32 of the Tápé-Malajdok cemetery in the southern Hungarian Plain share many similarities, indicating close contacts between the two areas. – (After Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1999, fig. 4).

one cannot help but speculate on the many dozens of ethnic groups among the peoples conquered by the Huns.

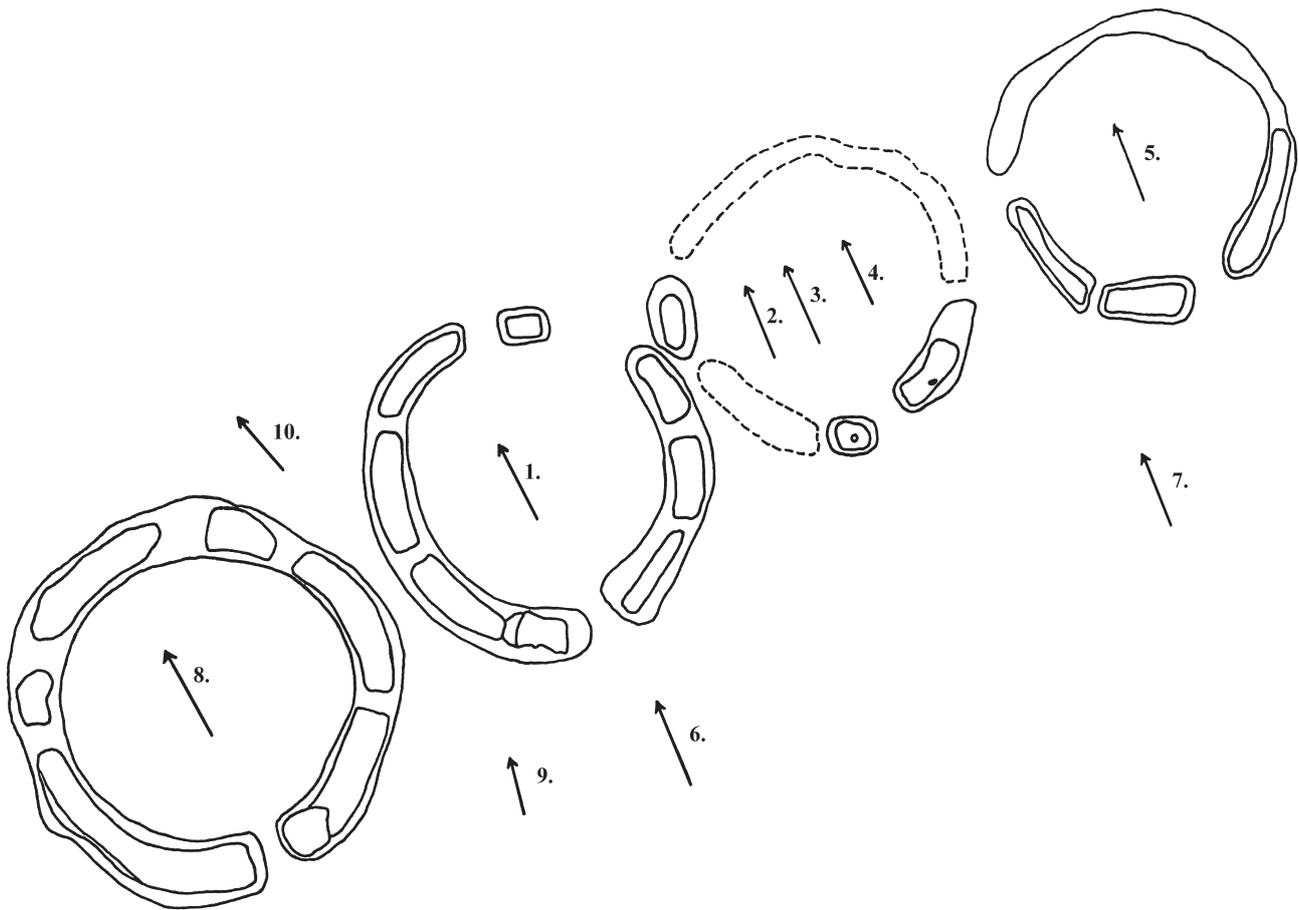
The lack of an established chronology for the Sarmatian assemblages of the Hun period is again a source of uncertainty. Even though certain artefact types are expressly dated to this period, most of the pieces in question probably appeared at an earlier date, but only gained wider currency at this time. These include pottery wares polished to a dark grey or black lustre and adorned with smoothed motifs (one new element is the appearance of figural decoration beside the earlier geometric patterns) – the gritty wares already mentioned



**Fig. 302** Selection of finds from Csongrád-Kenderföldek (or Laktanya), the type site of the Csongrád group: vessels with smoothed and fluted decoration, Levice/Prša type brooches, »Maeotian« sword and bone needle-case. The custom of skull deformation and of folding the sword before deposition were also documented. – (After Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1999, figs 18. 20-21).

(figs 306, 1-2; 251). Some pottery shapes and decorations appear only in this period, among them variants of the so-called Murga-type jugs (fig. 306, 4-5). A coin-dated assemblage confirms Vaday's conjecture that the production of vessels with a profiled belt across the middle was begun in this period (fig. 307)<sup>1152</sup>. Glass vessels stand out due to their dating value (fig. 308). Despite the virtually complete cessation of trade with the Roman provinces, leading to the disappearance of Roman imports from the Sarmatian burials, glassware

<sup>1152</sup> Vaday 1985b, 29-33. – Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1994b, 72.



**Fig. 303** Plan of the Sándorfalva-Eperjes cemetery, a burial ground used by a community of warriors in the late 4<sup>th</sup>-early 5<sup>th</sup> century. – (After Vörös 1982/1983, fig. 2).

can be found in high numbers in the material from the Barbaricum. Many varieties can be distinguished, most of which are traditionally dated to the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries: ovoid cups decorated with trailing, wavy lines and blue bosses, and their variants; tall cups with everted rim bearing a design of garlands; and conical beakers<sup>1153</sup>. Kowalk-type beakers cut with oval facets represent one of the period's type finds (**fig. 304**)<sup>1154</sup>. The period's jewellery is comprised of brooches with inverted and side-turned feet, which was a popular and widespread type surviving into the Hun period from earlier times; torcs with pear-shaped terminals and a »keyhole« opening; and large silver earrings with polyhedral carnelian beads and a hook and loop fastener (**fig. 305**). Buckles tend to follow the period's international fashion, reflected by the use of a thicker loop with the prong coping over the loop and the popularity of large buckles with the prong extending beyond the loop (**figs 269. 299**). Female costumes lavishly embroidered with beads appear to have gone out of fashion: the beads recovered from burials were usually parts of necklaces and rarely adornments of the hemline or the belt. In contrast to the preceding period, glass beads became rarer during the Hun period and were replaced with pieces made from carnelian. The most popular bead types were of the polyhedral stone or glass variety and flat disc-shaped beads carved from amber. Instead of the brighter, colourful sets,

<sup>1153</sup> Barkóczy/Salamon 1968.

<sup>1154</sup> A. Kiss 1999, 22 fig. 7.



**Fig. 304** Finds from Sándorfalva-Eperjes, Grave 5 dated with a Kowalk type cup. – (After Vörös 1982/1983, fig. 9 pls IV, 3; V, 2. 6. 9; VI, 3).

a preference for darker shades (blue and brown) can be noted (fig. 309)<sup>1155</sup>. A few differences can also be noted in costume: female belts include variants fastened with buckles, reflecting a new fashion. From the 5<sup>th</sup> century onward, the earlier colourful diversity of the material culture disappears and an exactly opposite tendency can be noted, as shown by the rapid uniformisation of the material culture and the ap-

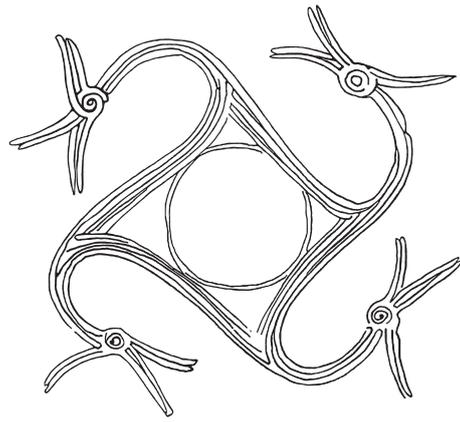
<sup>1155</sup> Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1994b, 71-73.



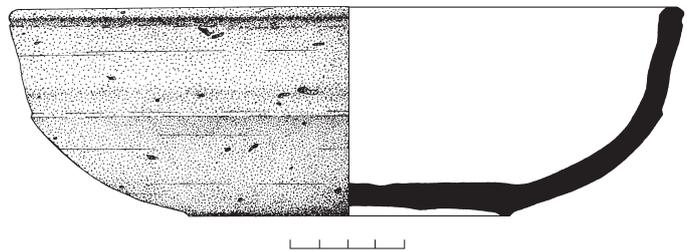
**Fig. 305** Sarmatian finds from the Hun period: **1** Tiszaföldvár-Brick factory (after Rome 1993, no. 45, 15). – **2-4** Madaras-Halmok (after Vörös 2003, 24-25). – **5** Kompolt-Kistéri tanya (after Vaday 1997, no. 93). – **6-10** selection of finds from Üllő, Site 5 (KM, excavation of V. Kulcsár and team, unpublished; photo L. Szászvári).



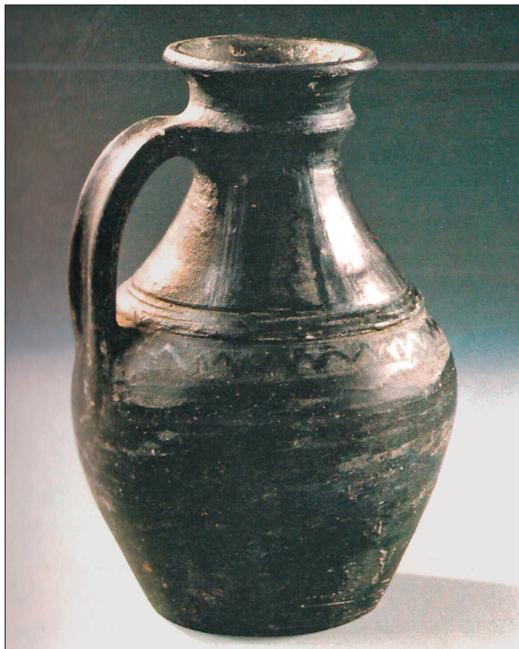
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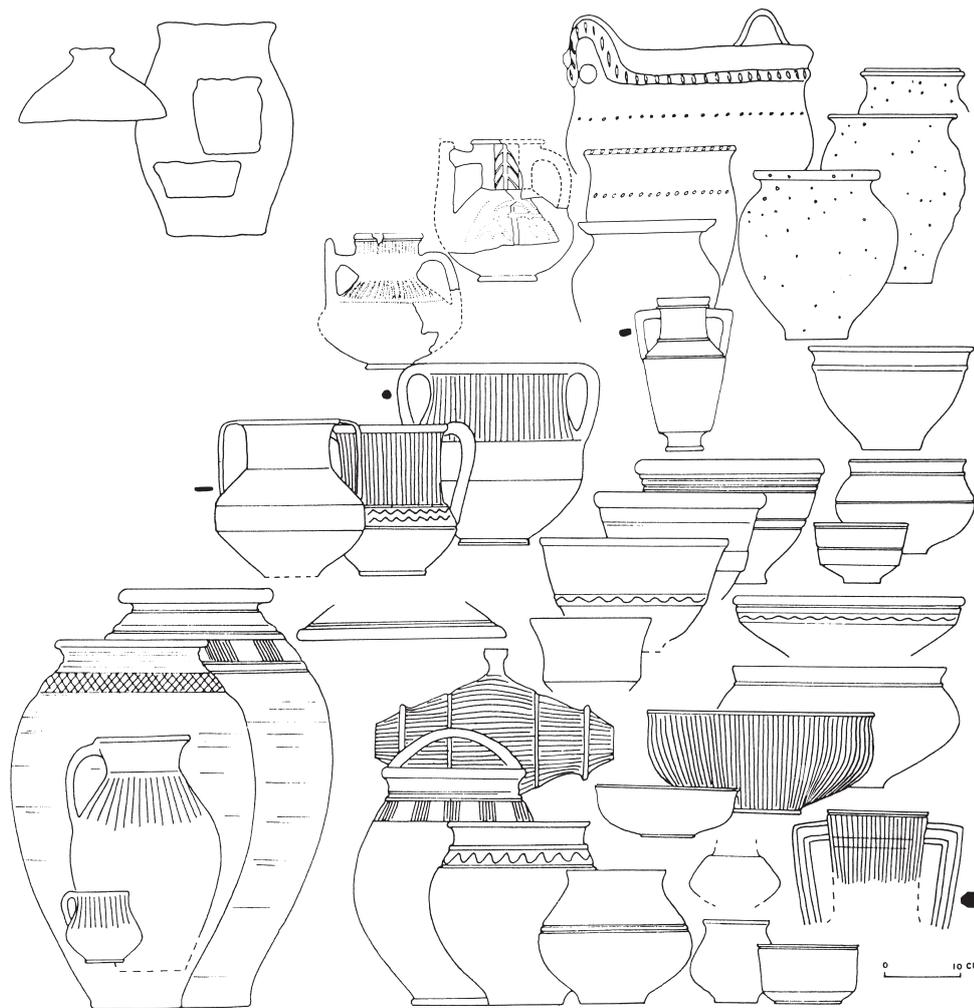


4



5

**Fig. 306** Typical smoothed decoration on late 4<sup>th</sup>-early 5<sup>th</sup> century pottery: **1-2** figural smoothed decoration on Sarmatian vessel (after Sós-kuti/Wilhelm 2006, figs 29, 2; 33, 1a-b). – **3** bowl with smoothed decoration (after Sós-kuti/Wilhelm 2006, fig. 5, 2). – **4** Murga type jug from Murga (after Tejral n. y., 111). – **5** Murga type jug of Sarmatian character from Nagyhalász-Tétke (JAM; photo Z. Toldi).



**Fig. 307** Characteristic Sarmatian vessels of the Hun period from Tiszaföldvár-Brick factory. – (After Vaday 1994).

pearance of an archaeological horizon with more or less similar find assemblages across an immense area (fig. 310)<sup>1156</sup>. The nature of this culture has been best described by Váczy:

It seems to have been less a case of the »Germanisation« of the Huns rather than of the Germanic peoples adopting several elements of the mounted nomadic culture. These cultural impacts can be principally noted among the eastern Germanic tribes, especially the Goths. [...] Around 250 AD [...] they toppled the rule of the Iranian Sarmatians (Alans). [...] They became familiar with the lifestyle of the mounted nomads of the steppe, they adopted the art of nomadic state administration, they mastered and perfected [...] the art of metallurgy, which

<sup>1156</sup> This uniformisation is reflected by the regular occurrence of polyhedral earrings, combs, handmade pottery, brooches with inverted foot, torcs and warrior burials. Two contrasting explanations have been proposed for this phenomenon. The traditional view is that this new find horizon can be linked to the settlement of *foederati* groups. More recently, it has been suggested (and we tend to accept this hypothesis) that these finds and cultural phenomena appearing across the entire province can be explained by a general process

of barbarisation, as well as infiltrating groups, rather than by the presence of barbarian *foederati* groups. This process began before 380 in the province, as shown by the dating of brooches with inverted foot and torcs (Barkóczi 1960, 123) and it marks the start of the tendency towards uniformisation which peaked during the Hun period on both sides of the Danube. The spread of barbarian (Germanic) costume – as far as Rome – is also borne out by the written sources (Kovács 2004, 137-139).



**Fig. 308** Roman glassware of the late 4<sup>th</sup>-early 5<sup>th</sup> century from Sarmatian burials: **1** Tápé-Malajdok, Grave 48 (MFM, Szeged; photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár). – **2. 4** Mezőszemere-Kismari fenék, Graves 29, 30 (after Domboróczki 1997, 91 no. 96). – **3** Kiskundorozsma-Kenyérváró domb (MFM, Szeged; photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).

became the so-called Barbarian style in the West during the Migration period. [...] This is one reason for the difficulties in separating the heritage of the Alans from that of the Goths<sup>1157</sup>.

Váczy also notes of the Huns that:

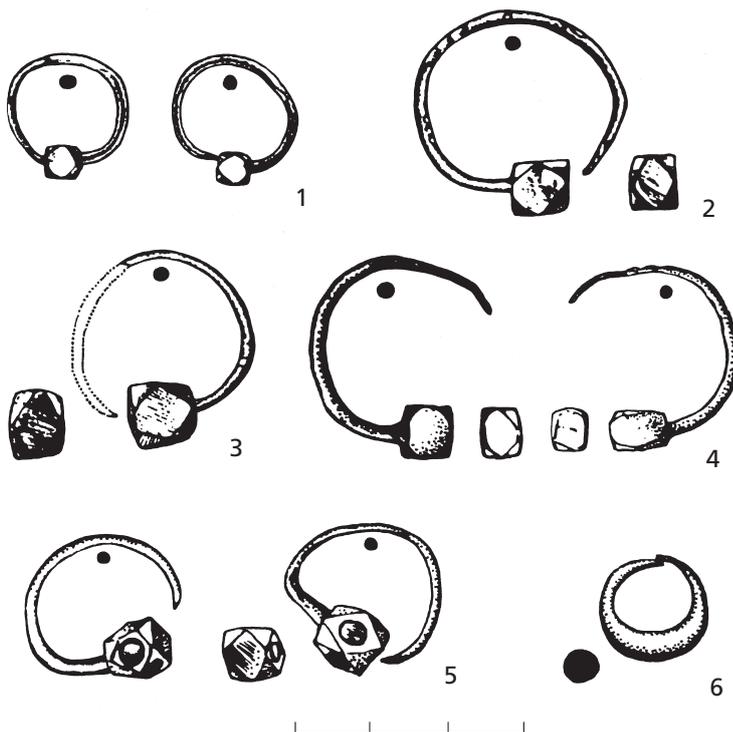
[They] had lived on the Turkestanic steppe for such a long time that they completely adopted its culture. There is virtually no difference between the culture of western Turkestan and the Pontic. We witness how, while in Turkestan, the Huns discarded their dominant leftward orientation typical for the Far East and adopted the rightward orientation that had emerged among the Iranian mounted nomads on the western steppe well before the turn of the millennium. [...] Hun culture was strongly allied to the late Alan development. [...] Romanism obviously played a major role in the emergence of this cultural syncretism [...] <sup>1158</sup>.

<sup>1157</sup> Váczy 1940, 125.

<sup>1158</sup> Váczy 1940, 125-126.



**Fig. 309** Beads from Tiszadob-Sziget, Grave 18. – (JAM; photo E. Istvánovits / V. Kulcsár).



**Fig. 310** Polyhedral and crescent shaped earrings – finds of the uniform, »international« fashion at the Great Hungarian Plain: **1-3** Tiszadob-Sziget. – **4** Ártánd-Kisfarkasdomb. – **5-6** Csongrád-Kenderföldek. – (After Istvánovits/Kulcsár 1999, fig. 9).

While it is quite obvious from the literary sources that the vanquished peoples were regarded as Huns from the moment of their submission, it is equally evident they had not immediately relinquished their language, their beliefs or their customs. At the same time, the tendency towards uniformisation in the material culture makes ethnic attributions increasingly difficult. The vanquished willingly acculturated to their conquerors

and made every effort to fit into the new power structure. In the case of the Carpathian Basin, an additional element must be considered, namely, the apparent dissolution of the roughly seventy-years-long Hunnic-Alanic alliance around the turn of the century. The Alans, who had enjoyed a high status until then, are only heard of from Western Europe after 406<sup>1159</sup>. In 405, the Huns and the Alans (or some of their groups at least) were still allies. When Radagaisus, the Gothic king, marched against Rome, Stilicho, first the guardian and, later, the most accomplished general of Honorius, Emperor of the Western Roman Empire, hired Uldin, the Hunnic king to repel their attack. The sources all named the Alans as the Huns' main allies<sup>1160</sup>. In 406 (or perhaps already in 405), the Huns defeated Radagaisus' troops on the outskirts of Faesulae (Fiesole). On 31 December 406, a larger group led by the Vandal Gunderic and the Alan Respendial crossed the Rhine and overran Gaul<sup>1161</sup>. It is uncertain whether the two events were related. While there is nothing in the sources to confirm this scenario, the archaeological evidence led Bóna to assume that the attack of a northern Hunnic wing from Silesia and the Morava Valley, combined with the Huns' advance along the Danube, caught the peoples living in the eastern half of the Carpathian Basin in a pincer movement and they fled in panic. The Vandals and the Suebi were joined by the Alans, whom Bóna located in the Danube-Tisza interfluvium, »and thus began the deluge into the Western Roman Empire, and the Age of the Great Migrations«<sup>1162</sup>. Another possibility that should be considered is that the barbarians appearing at the Rhine were in fact the fleeing remnants of Radagaisus' defeated army. This seems logical because it is hardly plausible that all his warriors would have been murdered or led into captivity by the victors. Radagaisus' fleeing soldiers probably retreated towards the Rhine and can be identified with the multitude crossing the river on New Year's Eve. Be that as it may, there is no record of any major attack against Pannonia at this time. The events of 405-406 were undoubtedly sparked by the Huns. What remains uncertain is whether, in contrast to the above line of reasoning, the Huns extended their rule to the Hungarian Plain at this late date or whether these events reflected a more active political interest in the west. In the latter case, it seems likely that the Western Roman Empire was high on the agenda of the Huns' foreign policy. If, however, the Huns had conquered the Hungarian Plain at some earlier date, as suggested above, Radagaisus' attack can most likely be explained by the flight of peoples dreading the Hunnic yoke. Both scenarios are no more than speculation for the time being. In contrast to the intricate tangle of events in the written sources, the archaeological record clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian Plain's population did not leave. Another intriguing question is how the ousting of the Alans by the Gepids from the upper echelons of the Hunnic court affected the Iranian population. Possible answers to this question can be expected from the study of burials. Being one of the most conservative elements of social culture, burial rites can offer some clues in this respect. The initial research in this field, mentioned above, needs to be followed up in order to identify smaller groups.

1159 Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 71.

1160 Zosimus V.26.3-5.

1161 Orosius *Adv. Pag.* VII.40. – Greg. Tur. *Hist.* II.9.

1162 Bóna 1982, 181; 1984, 266; 1991, 19-20.