

Mediterranean Roots of Great Moravian Luxury Jewellery

Inhumation burial grounds from the Great Moravian period contain a wide range of finds, including female jewellery in gold or silver, decorated with granulation, filigree, glass inlays, etc. This is mostly earrings of various types, spherical buttons (see the preceding contribution by Š. Krupičková) and finger rings, and, to a smaller extent, crescent pendants and sheet-metal beads for use in necklaces. The greatest number of such pieces was found in strongholds in the south-eastern part of present-day Moravia, situated at the core of the ninth-century Great Moravian empire¹.

Great Moravian luxury jewellery has attracted the attention of several generations of Czech and Slovak archaeologists, who have addressed various aspects of this issue. This essay focuses mainly on its origin by giving a brief outline of the development of related research. However, let me first present the current state of the Great Moravian chronology as it appears based on luxury jewellery, because the way a particular type was designed is closely related to the time of its creation. The core of this text discusses the creation or adoption of selected types of earrings and finger rings as is now recognised on the basis of analogous jewellery found by archaeological research in Southern and South-Eastern Europe. In line with the title of this contribution, I attempt to prove that most of the analysed Great Moravian types show an unmistakable relation to the jewellery of the Mediterranean region, or are more specifically of Byzantine origin.

Chronology

V. Hrubý created the basis of the chronology of the Great Moravian luxury jewellery in his analysis of the burial ground in Staré Město – Na valách (south-eastern Moravia). He dated the occurrence of the vast majority of types of earrings, spherical buttons and finger rings to the end of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth century (fig. 1 above). He was influenced among other things by (at that

time) prevailing opinion on the dating of given types to the tenth and eleventh centuries. His dating therefore represents a significant chronological shift, placing the occurrence of the jewellery further back in time. It was only simple earrings with a grape pendant (fig. 1 down) that he dated to the first half of the ninth century as he knew their analogies from Late Avar cemeteries². The chronology by V. Hrubý was taken over without any significant changes by B. Dostál, the author of a very influential monograph on Moravian cemeteries from the ninth and tenth centuries³. It was he who suggested the need to re-evaluate this »traditional« Great Moravian chronology after three decades of use. However, he meant mainly the upper limit of the occurrence of luxury jewellery, which probably ceased to be produced or worn after the fall of the Great Moravian Empire and its elites at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries⁴. He did not further alter the dating of the introduction of such jewellery. However, L. Galuška suggested that the usage of several types of earrings and spherical buttons should be shifted back to the first half of the ninth century⁵. H. Chorvátová later drew attention to the discrepancies in Hrubý's descriptions of several archaeological contexts at the burial site in Staré Město – Na valách (namely the superposition of several graves above each other) and their chronological interpretations. Her work shows that the locality included graves that contained Great Moravian luxury jewellery superimposed or disturbed by several later graves, which, however, is not in accord with Hrubý's relatively late dating of the types in the stratigraphically oldest graves⁶. Inspired by Chorvátová's study, I have collected a relatively large group of jewellery types from the deepest graves at the burial site in question⁷, taking into account the fact that some of these types could have been used as early as the first half of the ninth century⁸. I have also listed graves that contained mosaic eye glass beads and other contemporary types of glass beads. These beads were imported from somewhere in the Middle East (probably Mesopotamia) and were used in both Moravia and the whole of Europe from

1 For more recent contributions concerning Great Moravia, see e.g. Kouřil, Great Moravia. – Kouřil et al., Cyril and Methodius. – Macháček/Wihoda, Fall of Great Moravia. – Poláček et al., Elites.

2 Hrubý, Staré Město 206-214. 228-246. 270-271. Concerning the contemporary context see Chorvátová, Prunkvoller Frauenschmuck, esp. 6-17.

3 Dostál, Pohřebišťe. This reference work has been published in 1966 and is, therefore, outdated, and requires a critical review, especially concerning dates and the conclusion drawn from it.

4 Dostál, Zur Datierungsfrage 84; similarly Staňa, Příspěvek 42.

5 Galuška, Sady 94-97. – Galuška, Possibility of Moving 275.

6 Chorvátová, K relativněj; in detail also Chorvátová, Prunkvoller Frauenschmuck 26-66.

7 Ungerman, Ženský 710-712 figs 1-2.

8 This period roughly corresponded to the so-called Blatnica-Mikulčice horizon in the past. However, this concept was facing a growing criticism, namely from the 1980s, and was ultimately rejected as a mere unproven hypothesis. For details see Ungerman, Horizont. – Robak, Origins.

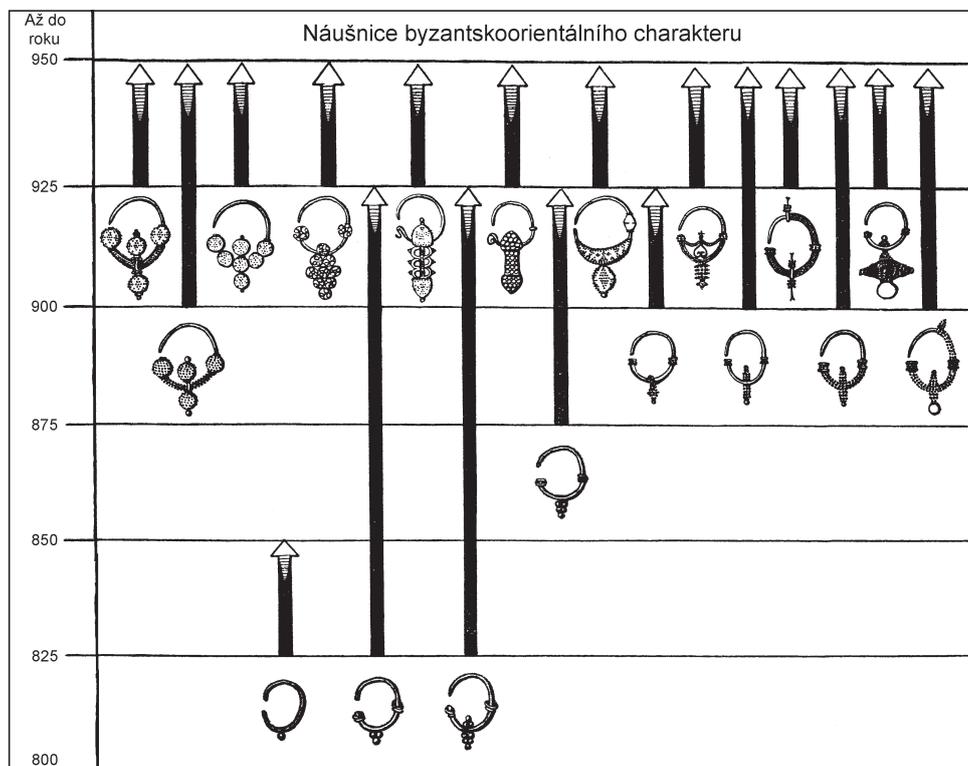


Fig. 1 V. Hrubý's conception of the development of Great Moravian luxury earrings. – (After Hrubý, Staré Město fig. 41, modified).

the second half of the eighth century to the beginning of the ninth century (although there are also some graves in which these beads were deposited significantly later)⁹. Due to their relatively early dating, these beads can be used as a starting point for the identification of the oldest Great Moravian female graves. It has become evident that some of these graves contained jewellery types not previously associated with the earlier Great Moravian period (approximately the first half of the ninth century), as current research had dated them to later phases¹⁰. Subsequent discussions resulted in a consensus regarding which types of earrings and spherical buttons from Staré Město – Na valách can be dated to the earlier Great Moravian period (fig. 2)¹¹. Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that more such types may appear in the future, be it from this locality or from different ones¹².

Attention has recently also been paid to the material culture of the end of the Great Moravian period. In this context, the recently excavated cemetery near the second church in the north-eastern outer bailey of the Břeclav – Pohansko stronghold plays a key role. On the basis of the radiocarbon dating of a set of local graves, Macháček et al. concluded that Great Moravian jewellery was worn there until the mid-tenth century and could even have been deposited in graves towards the end of this century¹³.

Opinions on the Origins of Great Moravian Jewellery

As early as the first half of the twentieth century, Czechoslovak researchers investigated the roots of Great Moravian luxury jewellery. At that time, it seemed improbable that jewellery decorated with such elaborate techniques as granulation and filigree had been made in Moravia. L. Niederle, who used to be the main authority on the topic, distinguished two places of origin: »Byzantine« and »Oriental«. He assumed that »Byzantine« jewellery – mainly earrings with grape pendants – was made in Constantinople or in the Eastern Mediterranean. More broadly, he associated this group with the use of gold and so-called coarse granulation and precious stones. In contrast, he included bead and basket bead earrings made from silver and decorated with finer (»poppy-seed«) granulation or filigree in the »Oriental« group. He assumed that they were made in Mesopotamia (eastern Syria and Iraq) and Turkestan – by which he probably meant what is today the territory of the Central Asian states east of the Caspian Sea¹⁴.

Under Niederle's influence, Hrubý denoted the gold and silver earrings found in Staré Město – Na valách as »earrings of Byzantine-Oriental character«. He hypothesised that most

9 Andrae, Mosaikaugenperlen. – Breibert, Hügelgräberfeld von Wimm 405. – Ungerman, Ženský 722-729. – Sode et al., Beads 319. – Šmit et al., Analysis. – Ruß, Steyr 307-310. – Nowotny, Thunau 75-77. – Neri et al., Trade of Glass Beads pl. 1.

10 Ungerman, Ženský 718-741. – Cf. Ungerman, Frühmittelalterliche Ohrhinge 44-53.

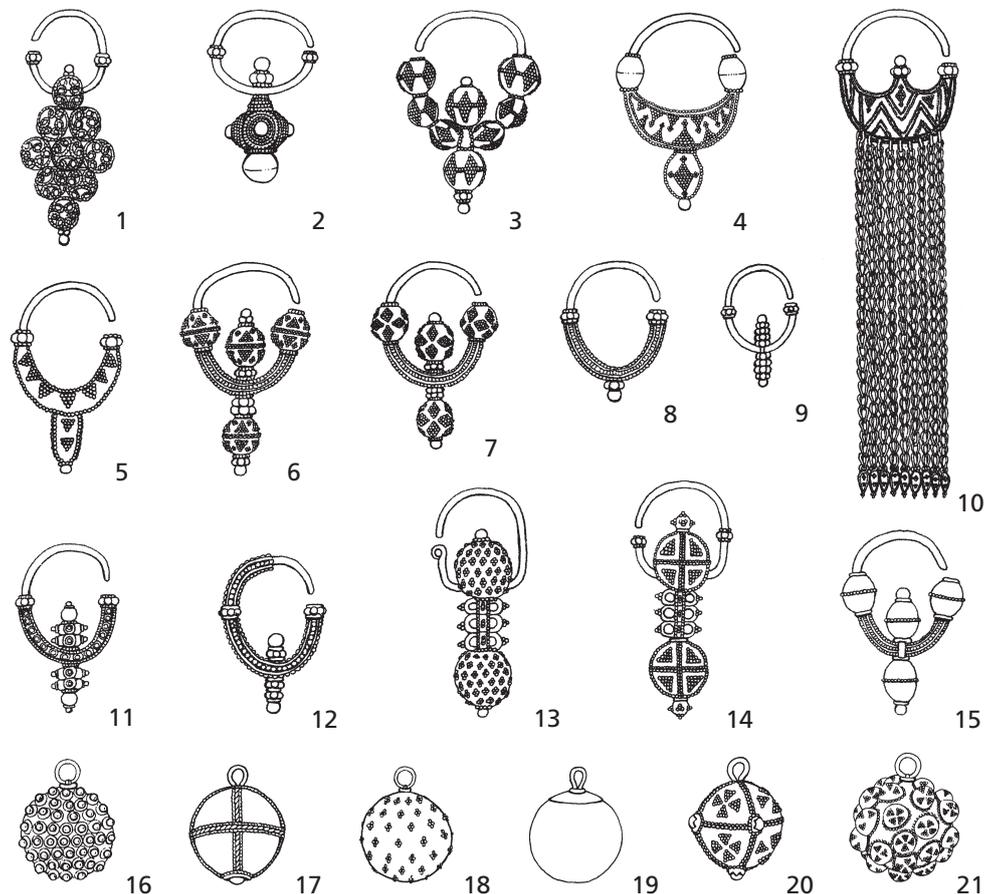
11 Chorvátová, Horizonty. – Galuška, Hledání 224-241 figs 215-216. – Ungerman, Prachtfingeringe 20-23.

12 For the dating of finger rings see Ungerman, Prachtfingeringe, esp. 51-52.

13 Macháček et al., Břeclav – Pohansko VII. – Macháček et al., Ende Großmährens, esp. 341.

14 Niederle, Byzantské; Niederle, Příspěvky.

Fig. 2 Types of luxury jewellery of the earlier Great Moravian period in Staré Město – Na valách cemetery. – (After Galuška, Hledání figs 215-216, modified). – Not to scale.



of them were manufactured in local workshops, but he did not deem it probable that such jewellery was produced in Moravia entirely independently. Hrubý assumed an external impulse in the form of foreign goldsmiths who brought this art to Moravia¹⁵. In the second half of the twentieth century, there were no reliable Mediterranean or other analogies that could suggest where such foreign artisans originated. Therefore, the Czechoslovak researchers gradually arrived at the interpretation that the sumptuous Great Moravian jewellery was a local product that drew on the traditions of Late Antiquity. The elaborate decorative technologies necessary to create such jewellery were supposed to be brought to Great Moravia by goldsmiths from the Avar Khaganate, at the period of its downfall (i. e., at the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries)¹⁶. This shift in opinion was also reflected in terminology, since the term »Byzantine-Oriental jewellery« gradually ceased to be used and was replaced by the »Veligrad-type jewellery«¹⁷ which implies the notion of locally produced jewellery, specific to Great Moravia.

I do not think that the question of the origin of Great Moravian jewellery can be answered unambiguously because

various types could have had different origins. It is much more meaningful to try to answer such a question for individual types (defined as precisely as possible): this would provide us with a basis for more general conclusions. A spatial analysis of a given type carried out in the broadest geographical context possible should always serve as our main starting point. Here, we must take into account the considerable differences in the archaeological record and the varying states of research across different parts of Europe - factors that have largely been overlooked in previous scholarship¹⁸.

The Oldest Great Moravian Graves with Luxury Jewellery

In the discussion about the origin of various types of Great Moravian luxury jewellery, several rich female graves uncovered mainly in the Staré Město agglomeration are of key importance. Their grave goods included, among other things, several pairs of gold or silver earrings of unusual or unique shape that appeared in very limited numbers or not at all

15 Hrubý, Staré Město 228-246. 308-312.

16 Benda, Antické. – Turčan, K otázke; Štefanovičová, Byzantinische Elemente. – Štefanovičová, Kultur. – Štefanovičová, K vývoju. – Szóke, Mosaburg 38-41. – Galuška, Hledání, esp. 99-104. 252-253. – Galuška, Jewellery. – Ungerman, Prachtfingerringe 24-27. – Ungerman, Frühmittelalterliche Ohringe 61-64.

17 Named after Veligrad, the contemporary name of an Early Medieval settlement agglomeration in the territory of today's Staré Město and Uherské Hradiště (Dostál, Vordringen 363. – Cf. Galuška, Veligrad; Galuška, Staré Město 246).

18 Ungerman, Prachtfingerringe 27-30. – Ungerman, Frühmittelalterliche Ohringe, esp. 132-134. 145-147.



Fig. 3 Gold jewellery from grave no. 193/51 in Staré Město – Na valách. – (After Galuška, Hledání fig. 202). – Not to scale.

elsewhere in the territory of Great Moravia. Let us consider, e. g., grave no. 193/51 in Staré Město – Na valách (**fig. 3**)¹⁹, or grave no. 209/59 in Uherské Hradiště – Sady²⁰: researchers agree that these graves are among the very oldest inhumation burials known at the centre of Great Moravia (see above). These graves thus clearly indicate that when inhumation was introduced in Moravia around the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries, women belonging to the local elite already owned quite numerous and diverse sets of luxury jewellery. However, there may be more explanations of such a situation. The most recent one was suggested by L. Galuška. In his opinion, luxury jewellery from the oldest female graves appeared »quite suddenly« in the aforementioned period, as no such jewellery is known from eighth-century Moravia. He agrees with existing research that the birth of luxury jewellery was mostly influenced by craftsmen who arrived from the Carpathian Basin after the downfall of the Avar Khaganate. In his opinion, the Moravians took part in the Frankish campaigns against the Avars and thus earned a part of the war booty. This would explain the fact that the oldest Great Moravian graves contained so many pieces of gold jewellery; it seems »as if the goldsmiths were not really forced to economise on material, that is, mainly gold – as if they had been oversupplied with it«. The presence of unique or rare jewellery types in the graves under discussion was addressed by L. Galuška, who argued that »the producers were only searching for their style, using the method of trial and error, as if they worked by

instruction and at the request of their new lords (...), who at that time maybe did not yet really know what they wanted«²¹.

Individual aspects of the problem can be seen in a different light, though. I believe that the production of the jewellery found in the oldest Great Moravian graves did not start at the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries, but that such pieces were worn by Moravian women as early as the eighth century. There can hardly be any factual or casual connection between the introduction of inhumation at the turn of the centuries and the (supposed) simultaneous onset of luxury jewellery production, because both phenomena are related to different aspects of life (i. e., the change in burial rites, and the existence of the social elite and its self-presentation, respectively). We must also realise another (and even more significant) fact: all our knowledge of Great Moravian luxury jewellery derives solely from the practice of inhumation with grave goods, because other archaeological sources (hoards, settlement features, layers, etc.) do not contain any such jewellery. In other words, had it not been for the Great Moravian habit of using grave goods in inhumation graves, we would have had absolutely no idea of the existence of local jewellery. As long as cremation burial rite lasted during the eighth century, luxury jewellery could not be documented in funeral contexts, because only a few cremation graves have been preserved from that time, and, what is more, they do not contain any items of great value. Still, there must have already been some elites in Moravia as proven by the discovery of hooked spurs²² (these, however, come from settlement layers, i. e., not from funeral contexts)²³. Women and girls, the wives and daughters of those mounted warriors, must have belonged to the elite as well and, thus, most likely wore items of jewellery.

If we accept the assumption that the wearing of luxury jewellery emerged not as late as the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries, but significantly earlier, then it is unnecessary to associate its introduction with the hypothesised arrival of goldsmiths from the fallen Avar Khaganate in Moravia. For that matter, we do not have any more precise information about the origin of the producers of the luxury jewellery – opinions on whether they came to Moravia – and, if so, when and from where – will always depend on conclusions drawn about the date and manner of the production of such jewellery. At the same time, we cannot *a priori* rule out the possibility that gold used to produce the oldest Great Moravian pieces came from the captured Avar treasure, even though it has not been proven so far. Not even contemporary written sources mention that the Moravians took part in the campaigns of Charlemagne against the Avars.

19 Hrubý, Staré Město 518-519 pl. 84, 1-8. – Galuška, Hledání fig. 202.

20 Galuška, Sady 137 fig. 88, 1-17. – Galuška, Hledání figs 203. 212. – Galuška et al., Uherské Hradiště 60-64.

21 Both quotations: Galuška, Jewellery 137.

22 Recently Galuška, Hledání, esp. 21-24. 43-47. – Jakubčinová, Ostrohy. – Janowski, Chronology. – Kouřil, Hakensporen.

23 Let me point out that if the archaeological manifestation of this elite military class looks perhaps rather »poor«, it is given mainly by the comparison with rich inhumation graves from the ninth century in which men were buried

with a sword and other weapons, more or less luxurious spurs, belt fittings, etc. Not that the male elite became »miraculously rich« at the turn of the eight and ninth centuries, the main reason is the introduction of inhumation which was associated with interring numerous items stressing the military »occupation« of their owners. On the other hand, finds of militaria and other prestige items from the ninth century settlement layers still remain relatively scarce and unimpressive (isolated strap-ends or other fittings, fragments of spurs and weapons; e. g., Macháček et al., Břeclav – Pohansko X 388-407. 422-425).

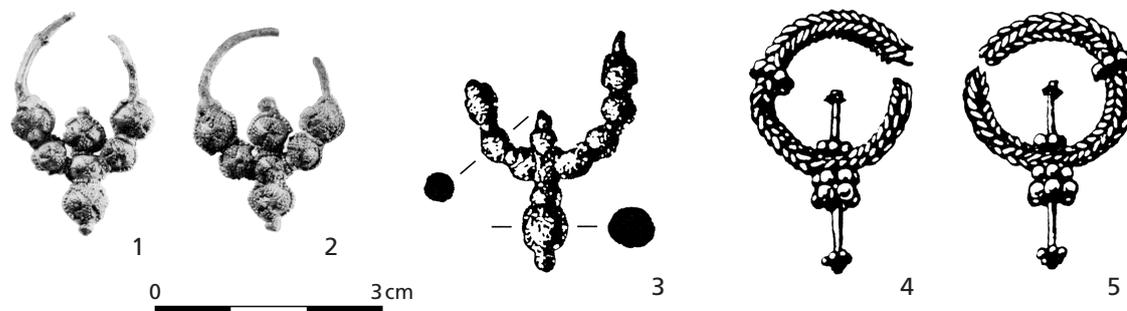


Fig. 4 Analogies of Great Moravian luxury earrings in Central and South-Eastern Europe. **1-2** Wartmannstetten, grave 11, Austria. – **3** Okorsh, Bulgaria. – **4-5** Nagypall I, grave 54, Hungary. – (1-2 after Cat. Berlin 1967, fig. 87; 3 after Atanasov/Grigorov, *Metalni nakit* pl. 4, 9; 4-5 after Kiss, *Baranya* pl. XXX, 54/1). – Scale 1:1.

Finally, I would like to object to the aforementioned opinion that the makers of the jewellery from the oldest Great Moravian graves »were only searching for their style« and that their customers »did not yet really know what they wanted«. We can argue that, if the roots of such jewellery go deeper into the eighth century, then the several rich graves with pieces of »unique« character could represent only a short final phase of a considerably longer period during which such jewellery was produced. What is more, if we take into account a larger geographical context, we see that many construction elements of the earrings from those graves are seen in contemporary earrings found in the Carpathian Basin and the Balkans; moreover, these two regions were strongly influenced by the Mediterranean region. This makes us believe that noble Moravian women (or goldsmiths working for them) were indeed aware of the trends in contemporary jewellery making in other parts of Europe. If this is the case, it is sometimes difficult to say whether a particular item was imported into Great Moravia, or whether it was produced there as a more or less precise copy of a foreign model. Still, when we accept the idea that foreign goldsmiths worked in Moravia, there is a thin line between these two types of products²⁴.

Earrings

Let us now turn to selected types of earrings from the earliest Great Moravian graves – along with certain construction elements – that may be imports or faithful imitations of contemporary Mediterranean jewellery. The lower arc of the bead earrings from the aforementioned grave no. 193/51 in Staré Město – Na valách is covered with four smaller hollow beads made of sheet metal. There are also three beads slightly

larger in size above them; the largest bead is located below the lower arc (fig. 2, 3; fig. 3 top right). We see the same construction principle on the pair from grave no. 11 in Wartmannstetten, Lower Austria (fig. 4, 1-2). The complete grave goods were previously classified as Great Moravian jewellery, but recent analysis suggests that the Mediterranean region may be a more likely place of origin²⁵. Cast imitation found at Okorsh, Bulgaria, of a type also found at Wartmannstetten, argues in favour of this theory (fig. 4, 3)²⁶.

A very rich grave, no. 209/59 in Uherské Hradiště – Sady contained a pair of gold earrings with a double-sided grape pendant finished by a sea pearl at each end; the same decoration was used at the top of the upper arc (fig. 5, 1-2)²⁷. Another distinctive feature of these earrings is that three thirds of the ring are covered with fine wire mesh. The very use of genuine pearls proves the fact that the earrings were imported from the Mediterranean – or that at least their producer was strongly linked to this region (the person may have come from there or had contacts there)²⁸. We know more gold earrings of this type from the Staré Město agglomeration. The pearls, however, were not preserved (most likely due to their organic origin): only empty wire split pins for threading the pearls remained (fig. 5, 11 right)²⁹. Other such specimens from this site, as well as from Mikulčice, have a simpler design as their ring lacks braiding or other filigree decoration (fig. 5, 3)³⁰. We know a very few contemporary Byzantine models – they include, for example, a gold earring from the Donji Petrovci treasure in Vojvodina, Serbia (fig. 5, 4), whose deposition is dated to the end of the eighth century³¹. The construction scheme of these earrings was also copied in Late Avar earrings found in large numbers in the Carpathian Basin. However, sea pearls were replaced by glass beads in these cases as they were less expensive (fig. 5, 5-6)³².

²⁴ Ungerman, Earrings.

²⁵ Hampl, Wartmannstetten 26-30 figs 14-18. – Ungerman, *Prachtfingerringe* 71-73.

²⁶ Atanasov/Grigorov, *Metalni nakit* pl. 4, 9. – Atanasov et al., *Okorsh* 233 fig. 12o. – Cf. Ungerman, *Frühmittelalterliche Ohrhinge* 116-122.

²⁷ See note 20. – Mrázek, *Kameny* 34.

²⁸ Galuška, *Sady* 137 fig. 88, 7-8.

²⁹ Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 51/50. 103/50 (Hrubý, *Staré Město* 473-474. 480 pls 67, 6; 73, 15-16; Galuška, *Hledání* fig. 129). – Staré Město – Špitálky, grave no. 15 (Poulik, *Špitálky* 320 fig. 19, 1).

³⁰ Uherské Hradiště – Sady, grave no. 86/59 (Galuška et al., *Uherské Hradiště* 33-34). – Mikulčice – basilica, grave nos 240 and 683 (Klanica et al., *Basilika* 28. 141 figs 17, 5; 163, 3/683).

³¹ Bartzak, *Petrovci* 268 pl. 1, 10. – Demo, *Zlato* 63.

³² Čilinská's type IX (Čilinská, *Frauenschmuck* 65. 77-79 fig. 1). – Cf. Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 166/51 (Hrubý, *Staré Město* 514 pl. 78, 3).



Fig. 5 Earrings with genuine pearls, decoration of the upper and/or lower arc and their imitations. **1-2** Uherské Hradiště – Sady, grave no. 209/59. – **3** Mikulčice – Basilica, grave no. 683. – **4** Donji Petrovci, Serbia. – **5-6** Želovce, grave no. 43 and 177 respectively, Slovakia. – **7** Remulli, Albania. – **8-9** Pliska – Great Basilica, grave no. 27, Bulgaria. – **10** Mikulčice. – **11** Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 103/50 and 200/51. – (1-3, 5-6, 10 photos J. Foltýn; 4 after Demo, *Zlato* 63; 7 after Korkuti/Komata, *L'antichità* 101; 8-9 after Henning, *Pliska* pl. 15, 187-188; 11 after Galuška, *Hledání* fig. 129). – Scale 1:1.

Genuine pearls were used for making luxury earrings in Byzantium in the ninth and tenth centuries as well. However, only exceptional cases are documented in the territory of the Empire, as luxurious jewellery was hardly used as grave goods. This stresses the significance of finding such earrings in the direct vicinity of the Byzantine Empire, e. g., in grave no. 27 near the so-called Great Basilica in Pliska, Bulgaria (fig. 5, 9)³³. In terms of shape, this piece is of the type with four beads and a hook-and-eye fastening typical for the Mediterranean region, with the difference that a genuine pearl is (or, originally, was) fastened in place of both central sheet-metal beads. Such earrings could theoretically serve as a model for a large group of Balkan earrings with four sheet-metal beads. Indeed, most of the local earrings of this type have all the beads undecorated, i. e., smooth on the surface, by means of which the producers may have wanted to imitate the smooth surface of genuine pearls. The lack of surface decoration of the beads is certainly not due to economic reasons, as the lower arc is often lined with beaded wire (fig. 7, 1-2)³⁴. Simplification of these earrings resulted in a type with two smooth beads located above each other – one representative of this type was found in the aforementioned grave no. 27 in Pliska, where the lower bead is larger than the upper one (fig. 5, 8). Similar earrings are known from other parts of the

Balkans, too. The piece found at the Remulli site in Albania³⁵, for example, has a hook-and-eye fastening (fig. 5, 7). On the contrary, this type is rare in Moravia, either with a decorated ring (fig. 5, 11 down), or with an undecorated one (fig. 5, 10), but without the fastening. With respect to their unique occurrence, such earrings can be classified as imports or local imitations.

Earrings with four sheet-metal beads are the most common type of bead earrings in Great Moravia. The beads are always made from two hemispheres and are always decorated, even if only with a beaded wire that conceals the seam (figs 2, 15; 6, 5). A more common decoration has the form of geometric patterns made with granulation (figs 2, 6-7; 6, 1-3, 6-9) and the granulation of the whole surface of the bead where each granule is supported by a miniature, round, wire ring (fig. 6, 4). Such earrings are by no means a Great Moravian speciality; they have been found in a large area reaching from Germany to Greece³⁶. If the Great Moravian specimens are part of such a spatially extensive group of finds, the only possible interpretation is that this type of jewellery has its origin in a single important centre, which was hardly elsewhere than in the Byzantine Empire. Equally important is the fact that all three main variants found in Moravia are known in the territory of the Byzantine Empire or in its

³³ Vazharova, *Pliska* figs 1; 2, 1. – Henning, *Pliska* 693-694 pl. 15, 187-188.

³⁴ Ungerman, *Frühmittelalterliche Ohringe* 85-116.

³⁵ Korkuti/Komata, *L'antichità* 101 no. 387.

³⁶ Ungerman, *Frühmittelalterliche Ohringe*, with numerous references.



Fig. 6 Earrings with four sheet-metal beads from the territory of Great Moravia (1-9) and Croatia (10). 1 Olomouc-Slavonín, grave no. 70. – 2 Staré Město – Na valách (from disturbed grave). – 3 Dolní Věstonice – Na pískách, grave no. 742/57. – 4 Mikulčice – Klášteřísko, grave no. 1314. – 5 Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 33/48. – 6 Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 151/50. – 7 Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 22/48. – 8 Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 76/48. – 9 Staré Město – Na valách, grave no. 5/48. – 10 Nin – Church St. Asel. – (1. 2. 4-9 photos J. Foltýn; 3 photo J. Špaček; 10 after Milošević, Hrvati 291). – Scale 1:1.



Fig. 7 Earrings with four sheet-metal beads (1, 2, 4) and their cast imitation (3) from South-Eastern Europe. 1 Dukat i Ri, Albania. – 2 Stenje – Golem Grad, grave no. 64, North Macedonia. – 3 Alba Iulia – Termele Romane, Romania. – 4 Magula Hadzimisiotiki, Greece. – (1 after Korkuti/Komata, L'antichità tav. IV, no. 396; 2 after Maneva, Jewellery from Macedonia, no. 15a-b; 3 after Dragotă et al., Alba Iulia 52; 4 after Grundmann, Magula pl. 36). – Not to scale.

close vicinity as well: those with undecorated beads (fig. 7, 1-2, 4), or with the hemisphere joint covered with beaded wire (fig. 8, 1); those with beads decorated with granulation arranged in geometric patterns (fig. 6, 10); and finally those with beads completely covered with coarse-grained granulation (cf. fig. 8, 2). It is likely that all of these variants originated in the Mediterranean (though not necessarily in the same period of time) and from there they spread to Great Moravia to be adopted by local craftsmen. However, they

did not completely copy all of the construction details of the Mediterranean models. A number of Balkan pieces are made with the lowest bead larger in size than others (figs 7, 1 right; 7, 2), or the ring has the eye-and-hook fastening at the end of the lower and the upper arc respectively (fig. 7, 1, 4; fig. 8, 1-2). On the contrary, the Great Moravian specimens (fig. 6, 1-9) lack these features. Furthermore, a chronological analysis concluded that this jewellery had long been made in the Byzantine territory, at least during the eighth to eleventh

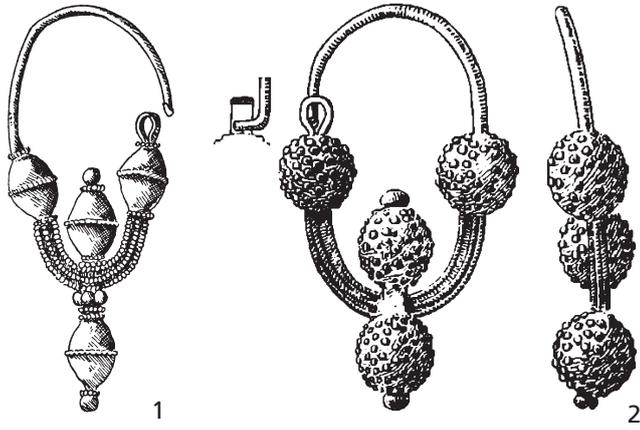


Fig. 8 Earring with four sheet-metal beads (1) and cast imitation (2) from South-Eastern Europe. 1 Matičane, grave no. 31, Kosovo. – 2 Garvăn, Romania. – (1 after Jovanović/Vuksanović, Matičane Y 243; 2 after Comşa/Bichir, Garvăn fig. 1). – Scale 1:1.

centuries, repeatedly inspiring and influencing the production of similar earrings in the whole South-Eastern and Central Europe. Seen from this perspective, the manufacturing of these earrings in Great Moravia seems only an episode limited by time and space. This is why I do not consider it very probable that Great Moravia played an important role in the spread of this type of jewellery into the Carpathian Basin and Poland where the use of four-beaded earrings in the second half of the tenth century and the eleventh century was documented³⁷.

Great Moravian grape-pendant earrings are also generally based on Mediterranean models. In the Roman period and Late Antiquity, such earrings consisted of a one-sided triangle-shaped flat grape pendant made up of granules (fig. 9, 1-2)³⁸. The design of this type of earring was changed no later than the eighth century as its flat grape pendant was replaced by a three-dimensional grape pendant made up of several »levels« or »wreaths« of granules with a larger granule at the bottom end. Nodules are also added on both ends of the lower arc. An example of this new shape is a gold earring from the Late Avar burial ground of Vösendorf on the southern outskirts of Vienna (fig. 9, 4). Identical pieces are found in Great Moravia as well, e. g., in Mikulčice (fig. 10, 1). However, neither the new shape of the grape pendant, nor the nodules could be a local innovation. This is demonstrated by a rich female grave near the St. Mihovil (Michael) Church in Trilj, South Croatia, which contained (among other things) three pairs of earrings with a double-sided three-dimensional grape pendant and nodules. One of the pairs has an undecorated ring (fig. 10, 3); two pairs are characteristic with their lower arcs and half of the upper arcs decorated using rope twists

and differ only in the length of the grape pendants (fig. 10, 4-5). We are able to date the grave to the end of the eighth century as it contained an unworn Byzantine solidus of Constantine V and his son Leo (760-775)³⁹. The importance of this grave complex thus lies in proving the Mediterranean origin of the filigree decoration that covers the entire upper arc or part of it. This decorative element (as we discussed above) is seen in certain earrings from Late Avar burial grounds (cf. fig. 4, 4-5)⁴⁰ and from the oldest Great Moravian female graves (fig. 2, 12; fig. 3 right; fig. 5, 1-2, 11). It disappeared from Central Europe in the course of the ninth century, and we do not even see it any more in the Mediterranean region and the Balkans. Contrary to this, production of earrings with a three-dimensional grape pendant went on for several more centuries in the Byzantine Empire, as shown by a gold piece from Thessaloniki allegedly dated to the thirteenth century (fig. 9, 3)⁴¹.

There is no detailed study of many other types of Great Moravian earrings that would include a comparison with similar types in other parts of Europe. These include, e. g., Great Moravian basket-bead earrings, which constitute a diverse group. Their only decorative elements are globes made from filigree wire, called »basket beads«. Basket beads consist of two hemispheres, each of them composed of several pretzel-shaped beaded wires (fig. 11, 1-3, 5), or rarely of circles made from such wire (fig. 11, 4). The lowest number of basket beads in a single earring is four (fig. 11, 4-5), when there are more, they cover the entire lower arch (fig. 11, 2-3), or they form a biconical accumulation under the lower arc (fig. 11, 1). Czech and Slovakian archaeologists have never denied that the filigree basket bead is an element taken over from Mediterranean jewellers. The only question was where and how did the Great Moravian basket-bead earrings originate. Since no detailed foreign analogies were known, the prevailing view gradually became that they were of local origin (cf. above).

The earrings of the simplest design – with four basket beads – from South-Eastern Europe were collected and analysed by P. Langó several years ago. They were found most frequently in the area of what is now the Republic of North Macedonia. Their main feature is a precisely made basket, comprising about a dozen drop-shaped fine plain wires. Both hemispheres are reinforced and connected with a circular wire at their maximum diameter. The ring of these earrings is usually fitted with a functional loop-and-hook fastening. Both these features are also contained in a pair of earrings from an unknown site in Bulgaria (fig. 12, 1), which is also provided with six chains suspended on the lower arc. These Balkan earrings are dated to the tenth to eleventh centuries⁴². Except

37 Ungerman, Frühmittelalterliche Ohrringe 65-82. 134-145. – Ungerman, Herkunft 223-231.

38 E. g., Baltoyianni, Jewellery 177 no. 189. – Bingöl, Ancient Jewellery 69 no. 42. – Micheletto et al., Necropoli in Piemonte 107 fig. 14.

39 Karaman, Trilj. – Piteša, Katalog 86-92. – Piteša, Zlato 60-72. For the coin, see Šeparović, Coin Finds.

40 For instance Abony, grave no. 97 (Hampel, Alterthümer 1, 795; 3 pl. 469, 1). – Nagypall I – Határi-dűlő, grave no. 54 (Kiss, Baranya pl. XXX, 54/1).

41 Cat. Thessaloniki 2002 no. 567. – Antonaras, Jewellery 122 fig. 9.

42 Langó, Kiszombor 432-438. – Rousseva, National 87.



Fig. 9 Earrings with grape pendants. **1** S. Albano Stura, Italy. – **2** Porto Rafti, grave no. 148, Greece. – **3** Thessaloniki – Diikitirou Square, Greece. – **4** Vösendorf – Laxenburgerstrasse, Austria. – (1 after Micheletto et al., *Necropoli in Piemonte* 107 fig. 14; 2 after Baltoyianni, *Jewellery* 177, cat. no. 189; 3 after *Cat. Thessaloniki* 2002, 437, cat. no. 567; 4 after Sauer, *Zur Geschichte* 44). – Not to scale.



Fig. 10 Earrings with grape pendants. **1** Mikulčice – Basilica, grave no. 588. – **2** Mikulčice – Church 6, grave no. 160. – **3-5** Trilj, Croatia. – (1-2 photos J. Foltýn; 3-5 after Piteša, *Zlato* 62. 65. 67). – Scale 4:3.



Fig. 11 Great Moravian earrings with basket beads from Mikulčice. **1** Basilica, grave no. 250. – **2** Basilica, grave no. 505. – **3** Church 6, grave no. 6. – **4** Basilica, grave no. 328. – **5** Cultural layer, inv. no. 4495/57. – (Photos J. Foltýn). – Scale 4:3.

for small details, a pair of damaged earrings from the Aerino site in Thessaly, Greece, has an identical shape as the earrings from the unknown Bulgarian site (cf. **fig. 12, 1**)⁴³. The Aerino necropolis remains unpublished and the jewellery found there has been preliminarily dated to the eleventh to twelfth centuries⁴⁴. A couple of incomplete earrings from the Ierissos site on the Greek peninsula of Chalkidiki is probably the simplest example of this type of basket-bead earring; this pair is

dated to the tenth century⁴⁵. All the above examples clearly show that earrings with four basket beads were worn in the centre of the Byzantine Empire and in areas under its strong political and cultural influence. Unsurprisingly, the preserved artefacts are of a relatively late date – tenth-century and younger. This is mainly due to the state of the archaeological record, as there are almost no published burial grounds with the finds of luxury jewellery from the Eastern Mediterranean

43 Whitley et al., *Archaeology* 74.

44 *Cat. Thessaloniki* 2002 nos 586-591, and others.

45 Bosselmann-Ruickbie, *Byzantinischer Schmuck* 232 no. 37.



0 5 cm

1



2

Fig. 12 Earrings with basket beads from Bulgaria. **1** Unknown site. – **2** Preslav Treasure. – (1 after Rousseva, National 87; 2 photo S. Steidl, LEIZA). – Scale 4:5.

and the Balkans from the eighth to ninth centuries. As the Byzantine jewellery is rather conservative, I consider it likely that earrings with four basket beads were produced here as early as this period and thus might have been an important impulse for the making of the Great Moravian earrings of the same design.

The only earrings with basket beads along the whole lower arc found outside of the Great Moravian territory that I am aware of were found in the Preslav Treasure (fig. 12, 2). The design of the basket beads differs from the one used in the above described Balkan earrings: the basket beads on the lower arc are constructed of only six rings made from beaded wire and a somewhat larger central ring, which connects the hemispheres. This construction is related to the fact that each of the smaller rings contains a genuine pearl on a thin peg⁴⁶. It can be only speculated whether these earrings with the impressive height of 12.3 centimetres are rare pompous jewellery made for a special occasion, or whether similar earrings were made on a larger scale in Byzantium, which would allow the interpretation that they could influence the Great Moravian production.

The Great Moravian earrings with a large accumulation of basket beads under the lower arc (fig. 11, 1) are unique in Europe. The question is whether this reflects past reality or rather the state of the archaeological record. The Preslav

pair of earrings demonstrates how scarce our knowledge of the Byzantine basket-bead earrings is; two or three newly discovered rich graves or hoards in the core of the Byzantine Empire could fundamentally change current ideas of the development and dating of these earrings. However, it is not necessary to *a priori* reject the view that the Great Moravian jewellers mastered the production of basket beads from beaded wire and started to use this element creatively – soon they started to make pendant shapes that were not produced in other regions. One of the examples could be the large pendant made of basket beads (fig. 11, 1).

In the older Czechoslovak archaeological literature it was assumed that certain types of Great Moravian earrings were inspired by Oriental jewellery making (cf. above). Little is known about Early Medieval jewellery in the Islamic countries in the Near East and Central Asia. This is caused by the fact that most of the available artefacts are mainly in museums and private collections and lack archaeological context. Provenance and dating can be usually ascertained only approximately, using style analysis. The number of extant earrings that can be reliably dated to and before the tenth century is very low; such specimens are by no means similar to Great Moravian jewellery. There are substantially more preserved specimens of Islamic earrings dated to the eleventh century and later; however, they do not show traits that could have

46 Totev, Preslav Treasure 59-60 fig. 27a-b. – Bosselmann-Ruickbie, *Byzantinischer Schmuck* 26. 233 no. 40; Aladjov, *Preslav* 48-49 no. 41.

47 See, for instance, Jenkins/Keene, *Islamic Jewellery*. – Zimmer, *Early Islamic*. – Gladiss, *Schmuck*. – Spink/Ogden, *Art of Adornment*.



Fig. 13 Great Moravian finger rings with hemispherical bezel decorated with granulation or glass inlays. **1** Rajhrad, grave no. 70. – **2** Mikulčice – Basilica, grave no. 322. – **3** Břeclav – Pohansko, Church 1, grave no. 242. – (Photos J. Foltýn). – Not to scale.

Fig. 14 Great Moravian finger rings with hemispherical bezel decorated with granulation or glass inlays (**1-2**) and a possible model of Mediterranean provenance (**3**). **1** Mikulčice – Basilica, grave no. 470. – **2** Přerov-Předmostí – Chromečková zahrada. – **3** Monceau-le-Neuf-et-Faucouzy, France. – (1-2 photos J. Foltýn; 3 after Hadjadj, *Bagues* 108, no. 18). – Not to scale.



survived from the previous era and were a closer link with Great Moravian earrings⁴⁷. Current research emphasises that Early Medieval Islamic jewellery did not develop in isolation, but absorbed older traditions (Late Antique, Sasanian, etc.), as well as being constantly influenced by contemporary Byzantine jewellery. Several types of earrings, which were both used in Byzantine and Islamic regions and differed only in minor modifications, are documented mainly for a period from the tenth to thirteenth centuries⁴⁸. However, because they started to be made rather late, these earrings could not have influenced the design of Great Moravian jewellery.

Finger Rings

Luxury gold or silver finger rings are found more rarely than earrings at Great Moravian burial grounds⁴⁹. The vast majority of luxury finger rings were assembled from two main sheet-metal components that had been made separately and then soldered together: the hoop and the bezel. Cast finger rings represent a completely marginal type within Great Moravia. Sheet-metal finger rings can be divided into several types based on the shape and decoration of the bezel. In the following text, I shall narrow my focus on the relatively frequently found rings with hollow hemispherical bezel decorated, either with coarse granulation (type A), or fine granulation and one or more glass inlays (type B). Speaking

about type A, the most frequent finger rings are those with a hemispherical bezel completely covered with larger granules that are set into small rings made from round wire (fig. 13, 1), or, more rarely, from a rope twist (fig. 3 left). The finger ring from Předmostí (fig. 14, 2) combines coarse granulation with a convex inlay from blue glass placed at the top of the bezel. This specimen thus stands between types A and B since the presence of one or more glass inlays is one of the identifying features of the latter. A finger ring from grave no. 322 at the Mikulčice basilica (fig. 13, 2) can be identified as type B, having a hemispherical bezel decorated with triangular granulation and a dark-blue glass inlay placed on its top. We see red triangular glass inlays in a piece from Břeclav – Pohansko, grave no. 242 (fig. 13, 3). A variant of this type is characterised by three triplets of small glass inlays in cylindrical collars made from sheet metal (fig. 14, 1).

Sheet-metal finger rings with a hollow, hemispherical bezel decorated with granulation and filigree appear in many parts of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe (apart from the territory of Great Moravia) during the Early Middle Ages⁵⁰. They can be divided into two main groups based on the shape of the bezel. The first group is characterised by a bezel of a simple hemispherical to conical shape (fig. 15); bezels of the second group are made of a hemisphere and a low cylindrical part below it (fig. 16). Finger rings belonging to the first group made of silver or bronze – golden pieces have only rarely been preserved – are usually decorated by filigree, less

48 Langó, Earrings. – Bosselmann-Ruickbie, *Byzantinischer Schmuck* 25-26. 41-44. 244-253. – Spink/Ogden, *Art of Adornment* 100-101. 114-121.

49 The text of this section is largely based on Ungerman, *Luxury*.

50 For more details see Ungerman, *Prachtfingeringe* 58-70 including literature.

often by granulation, or a combination of both techniques. Filigree decoration takes the form of teardrop-like shapes (fig. 15, 1-2), or arcade arches (fig. 15, 3, 9-12). Other pieces have the whole surface of the bezel covered with small wire rings (fig. 15, 13), or a coiled wire with loose threads (fig. 15, 4). The granulation is always based on triangles (fig. 15, 5, 14). The construction and decoration of the hoop is very variable. The specimens from the area of North Macedonia and Greece have a hoop assembled from several parallel wires soldered together (fig. 15, 6-7, 11). Sheet-metal hoops covered with parallel filigree wires (fig. 15, 1) are found elsewhere in the Balkans; these are more rarely complemented with an interlace in the middle (fig. 15, 8), or the interlace is imitated by a coiled wire pressed flat (fig. 15, 12). Among the less frequent hoops are those made of several wires twisted together (fig. 15, 13), or cast as a whole, including the decoration (fig. 15, 9-10). The described finger rings are typical mainly for the southern Balkans (fig. 17). They have been dated to the tenth to twelfth centuries.

The finger rings of the second group have a bezel assembled from a hemisphere and a low cylindrical part below it, which serves for fixing a wreath of large granules. This group is significantly more homogeneous than the first one, both in terms of the material used (silver and only rarely gilded bronze), and the bezel decoration (only granulation). Granulation takes the form of triangles (fig. 16, 1) that are sometimes complemented by granulated lines creating a cross or a star (fig. 16, 2-3). Such a decoration is seen in specimens from various parts of South-Eastern Europe. Contrary to this, finger rings of this group from Ukraine (cf. fig. 17) either have the hemispherical part of the bezel completely covered with finer-grained granulation (fig. 16, 4), or with larger granules set into wire rings (fig. 16, 6). The whole of the second group of finger rings is dated to the second half of the tenth century and the eleventh century.

Balkan researchers unanimously agree that the finger rings with hemispherical bezels are of Byzantine origin⁵¹. They probably spread to Dalmatia from Byzantine towns on the Adriatic coast. Elsewhere in the Balkans, use of these rings is related largely to the fact that, since the end of the tenth century, the Byzantine Empire was trying to win back territories south of the Danube that it had lost during the previous centuries. When Emperor Basil II (976-1025) gained Sirmium and (what is now) Belgrade towards the end of his life, the border of the Byzantine Empire moved as far as the southern edge of the Carpathian Basin. Similarly, the finger rings found in the territories of the Kievan Rus' and other parts of Eastern Europe are either Byzantine imports, or, more probably, local products made after Byzantine models.

Great Moravian finger rings of type A differ slightly from the aforementioned Balkan and Eastern European specimens

in shape and decoration. These differences are caused not only by the existence of regional production centres, but also by chronological differences. As for the first aspect, it is very likely that not all pieces from the Great Moravian graves are imports. It is mostly the types represented by several specimens (namely the finger rings whose bezels are completely covered with coarse-grained granulation; fig. 13, 1) that were produced in Moravia, albeit under the likely influence of Mediterranean models. Some differences between these Great Moravian finger rings on the one side, and the Balkan and Eastern European ones on the other are chronological. Moravian pieces are older: most of the finger rings dated with higher precision come from the earlier Great Moravian period (approx. the first half of the ninth century). It may be one of the reasons why we do not see any finger rings with a low cylindrical part covered with massive granules at the bottom of the hemispherical bezel (cf. fig. 16). Such finger rings are documented in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe no earlier than the second half of the tenth century.

Some of the type A finger rings were part of the oldest Great Moravian inhumation burials dated to the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries (fig. 3). As far as I am aware, no analogous specimens with such an early dating are known from other parts of Europe. We thus encounter a rather paradoxical situation: the oldest finger rings of this type are documented in Moravia, although this region is located far from the Mediterranean, which is their supposed place of origin. The reason behind this is the unfavourable state of the archaeological record in the Mediterranean region. Our current knowledge of Byzantine finger rings from the eighth and ninth centuries is very fragmentary, since we have few pieces dated to this period⁵². What is more, finger rings with a hemispherical bezel are not among them, although we know that this type must have appeared in the Mediterranean region around the eighth century; the large sets of Late Antique or Early Byzantine jewellery do not yet contain them.

The origin of type B finger rings (i. e., with the hemispherical bezel fitted with one or more glass inlays) is less clear. No such rings are found in the Balkans in archaeological contexts dated to the tenth to twelfth centuries. Glass inlays were used there, but for different types of finger rings. Therefore, one of the possible explanations suggests that type B is a product specific to Great Moravian jewellery making. We must bear in mind, however, the minimal number of Mediterranean finger rings from the eighth to ninth centuries. Consequently, every new find may alter our current state of knowledge. At the Monceau-le-Neuf-et-Faucouzy site in northern France, a silver finger ring with a bezel of truncated-cone shape was discovered, which has a convex inlay from opaque light blue glass on its top and the lower part of the bezel is set with a row of much smaller, yellow-glass round inlays (fig. 14, 3).

51 Giesler, Bijelo Brdo 112. – Cetinić, Stranče 152. – Tomičić, O prstenima 417. – Petrinec, Gräberfelder 280. – Bikić, Vizantijski nakit 111.

52 Bosselmann-Ruickbie, Byzantinischer Schmuck 147.

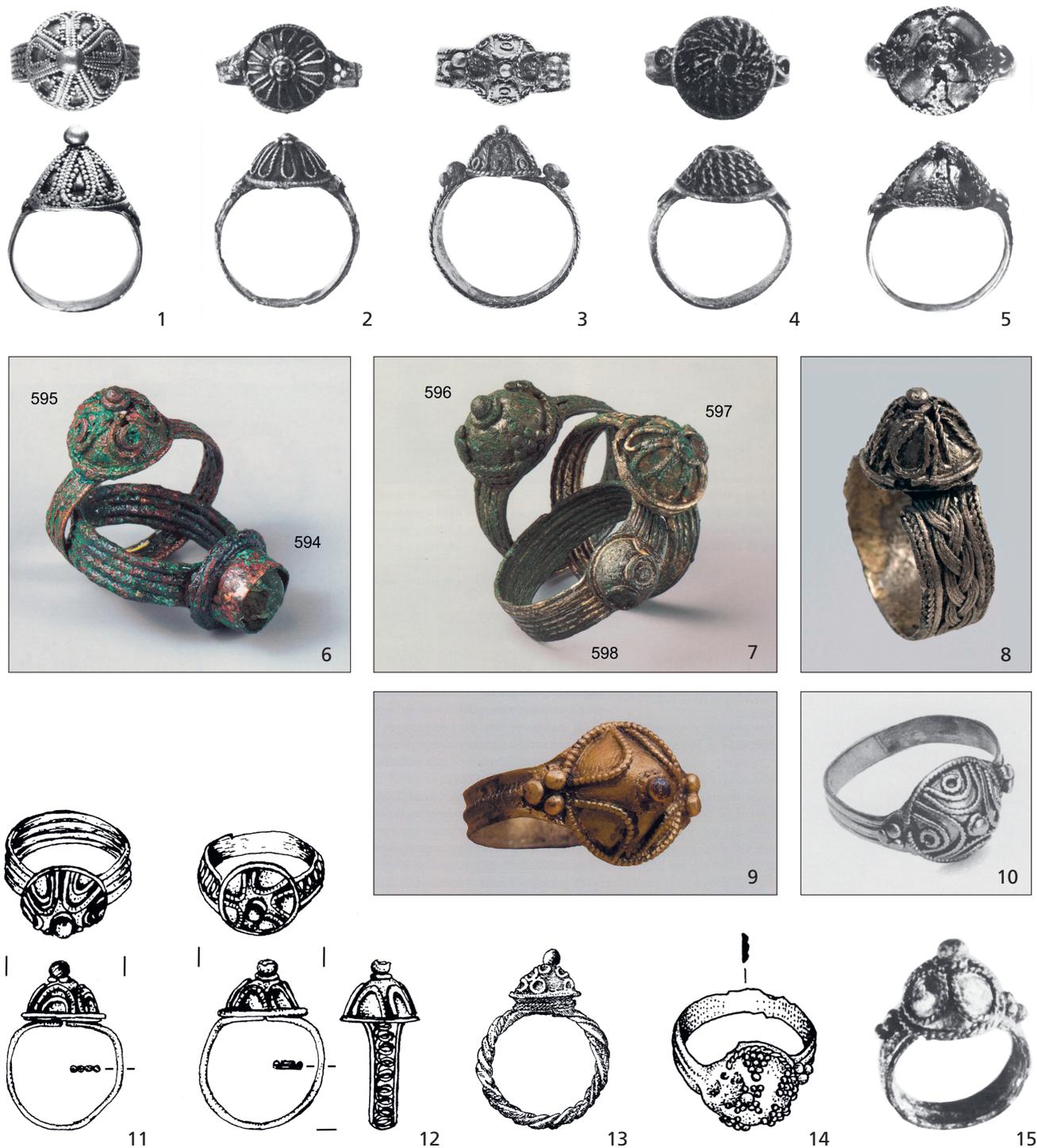


Fig. 15 Finger rings with hemispherical bezel from South-Eastern Europe (first group). **1** Matičane – Breg, grave no. 46, Kosovo. – **2** Mihaljevići – Varošiste, grave no. 71, Bosnia and Herzegovina. – **3** Čečan, Kosovo. – **4** Demir Kapija – Crkvište, North Macedonia. – **5** Bigrenica, Serbia. – **6** Edessa, Greece. – **7** Aerino and Azoros, Greece. – **8** Vukovar – Lijeva bara, grave no. I-1951, Croatia. – **9** Biskupija – Crkvina, grave no. 29, Croatia. **10** Ostrovica – Greblje, grave no. 16, Croatia. – **11-12** Dunje – Trpčeva Crkva, North Macedonia. – **13** Matičane – Breg, grave no. 3, Kosovo. – **14** Stranče – Gorica, grave no. 9, Croatia. – **15** Prčevo – Boka, grave no. 13, Kosovo. – (1-2 after Jovanović, Prilog figs 6-8; 3 after Jovanović, Schmuck pl. 4; 4-5 after Jovanović, Prilog figs 12. 18; 6-7 after Cat. Thessaloniki 2002 no. 594-598; 8 after Demo, Vukovar pl. 7, 1; 9 after Petrinec, Gräberfelder 281 Bild 128; 10 after Delonga/Burić, Ostrovica fig. 16; 11-12 after Kepeska, Trpčeva tab. II, 8-9; 13 after Jovanović/Vuksanović, Matičane Y239, 5; 14 after Cetinić, Stranče tab. 19, 6; 15 after Jovanović, Prilog fig. 15). – Not to scale.



Fig. 16 Finger rings with hemispherical bezel from South-Eastern and Eastern Europe (second group). **1** Zvonimirovo – Veliko polje, grave no. 17, Croatia. – **2** Svinjarevci – Studenac, grave no. 15, Croatia. – **3** Matičane – Breg, grave no. 16, Kosovo. – **4** Guščin, Ukraine. – **5** Alba Iulia – Izvorul Împăratului, grave no. 17, Romania. – **6** Pidgirici/Plesneck, barrow no. 1, Ukraine. – (1 after Tomičić, Zvonimirovo pl. 11, 3; 2 after Demo, Zlato 74; 3 after Jovanović, Prilog fig. 7; 4 after Komar, Černigov fig. 17, 3; 5 after Ciugudean et al., Habitat 109, no. 124; 6 after Liwoch/Müller-Wille, Druzhina fig. 10h). – Not to scale.

The finger ring is tentatively dated to the eighth century⁵³. This product is utterly rare for the Merovingian environment; therefore, it could only have been imported to the place of discovery, very likely from the Mediterranean region. If this reasoning is correct, even the Great Moravian producers of type B finger rings must have been inspired by the styles of the Mediterranean region, which does not rule out subsequent local modifications.

Conclusion

Opinions about the origin of Great Moravian luxury jewellery have been significantly influenced by the nature of the archaeological record in South-Eastern Europe and the state of research. In the past decades, excavations of burial sites from the eighth to twelfth centuries in Greece have been given limited attention. Specifically, excavations of these burial sites are not followed by adequate processing and publication⁵⁴. This, of course, makes it impossible to create a reliable chronology of the material culture at these burial sites and greatly complicates research into the impact of Byzantine jewellery in South-Eastern and Central Europe. It is equally important

to take into account the state of the archaeological record. When considering the origin and development of luxury jewellery in Early Medieval Europe, mere mechanical connecting of positively attested specimens is not enough. It is necessary to take into consideration that jewellery from some regions and periods has been preserved sporadically or not at all. The absence of jewellery in graves and hoards does not necessarily mean its absence in the living culture of the past⁵⁵.

The blind spots in the archaeological record are a problem we face when examining the beginnings of Great Moravian luxury jewellery. In the eighth century, the people of Great Moravia cremated their dead, which is why we have only a vague idea of the jewellery they wore based on the sporadic finds from settlement layers. The fact that inhumation started at the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries changed our knowledge of the jewellery »as with the stroke of a magic wand«. A wide range of jewellery was preserved in rich female graves from the very beginning of the Great Moravian period, consisting mainly of earrings, spherical buttons and finger rings with advanced shapes and decoration techniques.

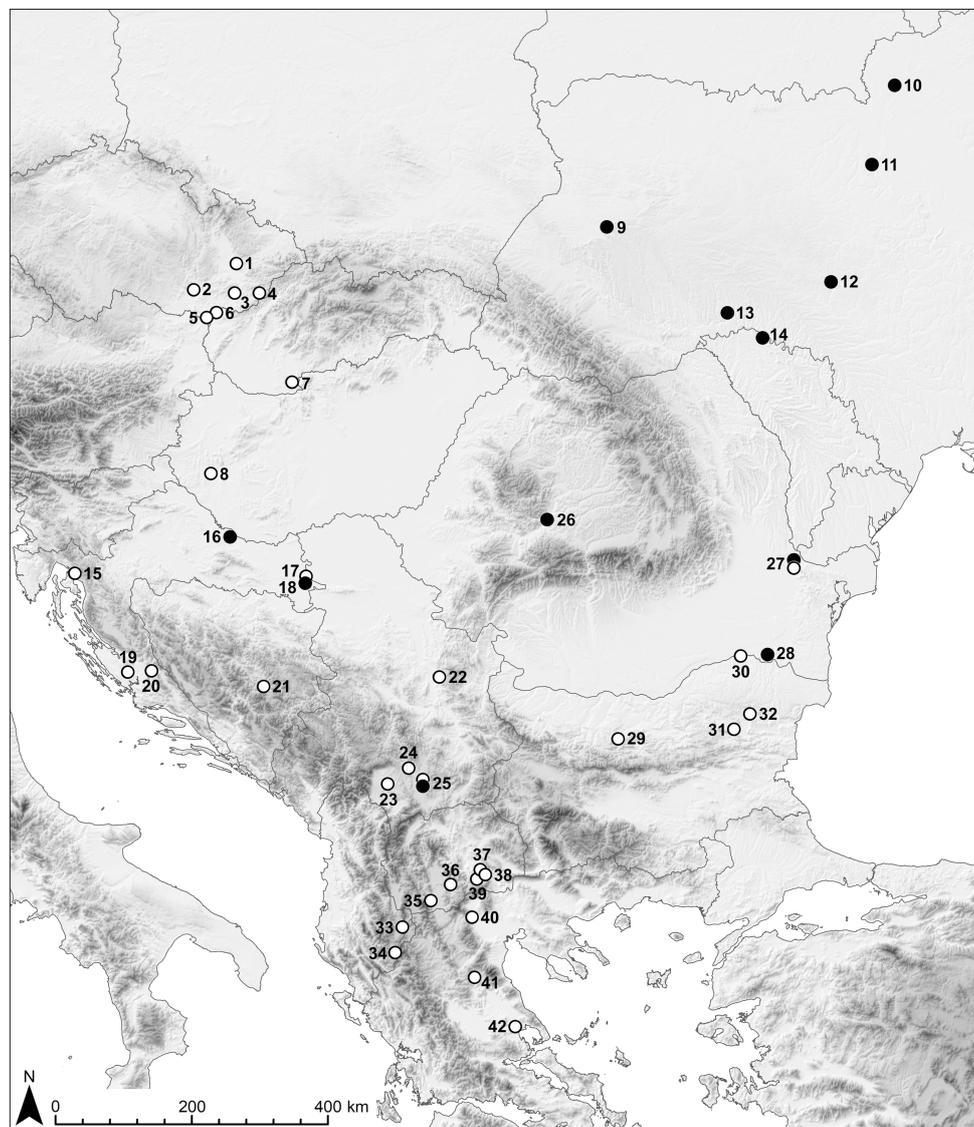
A comparison with contemporary jewellery from neighbouring regions showed that jewellery from the oldest Great Moravian graves was not some isolated and specifically local

⁵³ Hadjadj, *Bagues* 108 no. 18.

⁵⁴ Cf. Bollók, *Archaeology* 286-287.

⁵⁵ Ungerman, *Frühmittelalterliche Ohringe* 132-134.

Fig. 17 Spatial distribution of selected finger rings with hemispherical bezel of the first group (○; cf. fig. 15) and second group (●; cf. fig. 16): Czech Republic: 1 Přerov-Předmostí; 2 Rajhrad; 3 Staré Město; 4 Bohuslavice nad Vláří; 5 Břeclav – Pohansko; 6 Mikulčice. – Slovakia: 7 Biňa. – Hungary: 8 Zalavár. – Ukraine: 9 Pidgirci/Plesneck; 10 Guščin; 11 Kyjev; 12 Kopyivka; 13 Glybivka. – Moldavia: 14 Germanarie. – Croatia: 15 Stranče – Gorica; 16 Zvonimirovo – Veliko polje; 17 Vukovar – Lijeva bara; 18 Svinjarevci – Studenac; 19 Ostrovica – Greblje; 20 Biskupija – Crkvina. – Bosnia and Herzegovina: 21 Mihaljevići – Varošište. – Serbia: 22 Bigrenica. – Kosovo: 23 Čečan; 24 Prčevo – Boka; 25 Matičane – Breg. – Romania: 26 Alba Iulia; 27 Garvăn – Bisericuța/Dinogetia; 28 Canlia – Dervent. – Bulgaria: 29 Loveč; 30 Vetren; 31 Veliki Preslav; 32 Pliska. – Albania: 33 Kuç i Zi; 34 Rehovë – Shën Thanas. – North Macedonia: 35 Bitola/Heraclea Lyncestis; 36 Dunje – Trpčeva Crkva; 37 Korešnica – Krstevi; 38 Demir Kapija – Crkvište; 39 Krnjevo – Crveni Bregovi. – Greece: 40 Edessa; 41 Azoros; 42 Aerino. – (Graphic layout M. Hlavica).



product, but instead closely followed contemporary fashion trends in the South-Eastern Europe. These impulses probably came from the Eastern Mediterranean, where only a few pieces of luxury jewellery from the eighth/ninth century are preserved. More finds dated to the tenth to twelfth centuries have been found here and in the Balkans. Some of them – of course not all of them – are more or less close analogies to Great Moravian jewellery. In this context, let us mention earrings with four beads (figs 7-8) and four basket beads (fig. 12, 1). These types were produced in the Byzantine Empire over a long span of time. Although it cannot be proven directly due to the state of research, I consider it likely that their roots run deeper into the past, at least to the ninth century. Not only the luxury earrings made of wire, but also their cast imitations may be of importance in this context. Cast jewellery was produced on a massive scale in the Balkans. Some of it was made so meticulously that

its shapes and decorative elements faithfully reflected the luxury models on which it was based⁵⁶ (fig. 7, 3). In the case of rare types, usually only cast pieces physically survived (see for instance figs 4, 3; 8, 2), while the sheet-metal originals decorated with filigree or granulation are missing from the archaeological record.

In my opinion, this starts to show that Mediterranean jewellery making had a fundamental influence on the formation of Great Moravian luxury jewellery. It is more than clear in some types, while there is no comparative material from other parts of Europe in others, which makes it difficult to ascertain their origin. It is quite possible that some of these types are genuine local originals, especially if they are dated to the later Great Moravian period. However, it would be premature to quantify the relationship between the two groups because many jewellery types from Great Moravian cemeteries are still awaiting a detailed analysis.

⁵⁶ Grigorov, Nakiti fig. 10. – Ungerman, Frühmittelalterliche Ohrringe 116-122.

It is difficult to say exactly how Mediterranean types of jewellery came to be produced in Great Moravia – in this regard the possibilities of archaeology are rather limited. A certain role might have been played by direct imports from the Mediterranean region (not necessarily numerous), their imitations by local craftsmen or the arrival of foreign goldsmiths who knew the designs by heart and brought a complete technological know-how with them. Some of the jewellery types soon found a new home in Moravia and began to be produced there. This was bound to bring smaller or larger modifications of these types. The reason was that the jewellery makers (of whatever origin) worked on commissions for the Great Moravian elite and customer preferences largely influenced, for instance, which decorative motifs survived and which disappeared. This process of adaptation might have had other aspects, such as size: in Great Moravia, earrings with four beads were made significantly smaller than was usual in the Mediterranean region⁵⁷. There were also functional modifications: in the Mediterranean region, the eye-and-hook fastening was common (fig. 5, 7, 9; fig. 7, 1, 4; fig. 8, 1-2), while the Great Moravian earrings do not feature any such or other fastening, obviously, because the local female customers did not need and require it from their goldsmiths⁵⁸. Completely new, specifically Great Moravian jewellery designs might have originated. A creative goldsmith may

have combined commonly used construction elements into a new type of jewellery. The inventiveness and craftsmanship of the local jewellery makers should not be underestimated.

Such modifications gave rise to regional centres of early medieval jewellery: for example, Croatia clearly differed from Great Moravia and Bulgaria with the set of types, decoration, size and construction details, although all originated from Mediterranean jewellery. Analyses of each such regional centres are undoubtedly important. In my opinion, research focusing on early medieval jewellery should have the broadest geographic scope possible; it is desirable to analyse narrowly defined jewellery types across these regional centres. Only such a wide comparison will allow an understanding of the emergence and dating of these types, their spatial distribution and the associated transformations of shape and function, and hence the long-distance cultural influences and contacts that are not always reflected in contemporary written sources. Hopefully, this text has shown the irreplaceable role that Great Moravian jewellery has had in this research.

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Mediterranean Roots of Great Moravian

Luxury Jewellery

Gold and silver jewellery of the type termed »Great Moravian« in current research literature is found in cemeteries from the ninth and the first half of the tenth centuries in areas of the former Czechoslovakia and western Hungary. Since the inter-war period, Czech and Slovakian archaeologists have been concerned with the question of the origin of this jewellery. In this chapter, selected jewellery types are analysed with regard to this question, using the widest possible territorial range. Earrings with four beads made of sheet metal rank among the types of jewellery with supra-regional distribution. Outside Great Moravia, they occur in a large geographical area stretching from Crete to Bornholm. In different regions, examples of this type are characterised by specific features of construction and decoration, but they (more or less) follow Byzantine models. Great Moravian earrings with basket beads made of beaded wire have less numerous parallels in other parts of Europe, but the pair of golden earrings from the Preslav Treasure especially demonstrates that such earrings are by no means a Great Moravian invention. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that some subtypes are genuine Great Moravian products, especially those lacking exact parallels in other parts of Europe, e.g., earrings with a biconical accumulation of basket beads under the lower arc. Finger-rings with hollow hemispherical bezels that are completely covered with coarse granulation are another example of a supra-regional type that spread from the Eastern Mediterranean region to South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe.

Mediterrane Wurzeln des großmährischen

Luxusschmucks

Gold- und Silberschmuck, der in der aktuellen Forschungsliteratur als »großmährisch« bezeichnet wird, findet sich in Gräberfeldern aus dem 9. und der ersten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts in Gebieten der ehemaligen Tschechoslowakei und Westungarns. Seit der Zwischenkriegszeit beschäftigen sich tschechische und slowakische Archäologen mit der Frage nach der Herkunft dieses Schmucks. In diesem Kapitel werden ausgewählte Schmucktypen im Hinblick auf diese Frage analysiert, wobei ein möglichst großer territorialer Bereich berücksichtigt wird. Zu den Schmucktypen mit überregionaler Verbreitung zählen Ohrringe mit vier Blechbeeren. Außerhalb Großmährens kommen sie in einem großen geografischen Gebiet vor, das von Kreta bis Bornholm reicht. In den verschiedenen Regionen zeichnen sich die Exemplare dieses Typs durch spezifische Konstruktions- und Dekorationsmerkmale aus, folgen aber (mehr oder weniger) byzantinischen Vorbildern. Großmährische Ohrringe mit Körbchenperlen aus

Perldraht haben weniger zahlreiche Parallelen in anderen Teilen Europas, aber gerade das Paar goldener Ohrringe aus dem Preslav-Schatz zeigt, dass solche Ohrringe keineswegs eine großmährische Erfindung sind. Es ist jedoch nicht auszuschließen, dass es sich bei einigen Untertypen um originär großmährische Schöpfungen handelt, vor allem bei solchen, für die es in anderen Teilen Europas keine exakten Parallelen gibt, z. B. bei Ohrringen mit einer bikonischen Ansammlung von Körbchenperlen am unteren Bogen. Fingerringe mit hohlen halbkugelförmigen Ringköpfen, die vollständig mit grober Granulation bedeckt sind, stellen ein weiteres Beispiel für einen überregionalen Typus dar, der sich vom östlichen Mittelmeerraum nach Südost-, Mittel- und Osteuropa verbreitete.

Racines méditerranéennes de la joaillerie de luxe en Grande Moravie

Des bijoux en or et en argent, caractéristiques du type appelé »grand-morave« dans la bibliographie scientifique récente, ont été trouvés dans des cimetières du IX^e et de la première moitié du X^e siècle dans les régions de l'ancienne Tchécoslovaquie et de l'ouest de la Hongrie. Depuis l'entre-deux-guerres, les archéologues tchèques et slovaques s'interrogent sur l'origine de ces bijoux. Dans cet article, on applique cette question à des types de bijoux sélectionnés, en utilisant la plus grande focale géographique possible. En particulier, les boucles d'oreilles à quatre perles en tôle font partie des types de bijoux à distribution suprarégionale. En dehors de la Grande Moravie, on les trouve dans une vaste zone géographique qui s'étend de la Crète jusqu'à Bornholm. Selon les régions, ce type se distingue par des variantes spécifiques de construction et de décoration, mais elles suivent (plus ou moins) les modèles byzantins. Les boucles d'oreilles de la Grande Moravie avec des perles sphériques en fil perlé ont des équivalents moins nombreux dans d'autres parties de l'Europe, mais la paire de boucles d'oreilles en or du Trésor de Preslav démontre bien que de telles boucles d'oreilles ne sont en aucun cas une invention de Grande Moravie. Toutefois, on ne peut pas exclure que certains sous-types soient d'authentiques produits de la Grande Moravie, en particulier ceux qui n'ont pas de parallèles exacts dans d'autres parties de l'Europe, par exemple les boucles d'oreilles qui présentent, sous leur arc inférieur, une accumulation biconique de perles sphériques en fil perlé. Pour leur part, les bagues avec des chatons hémisphériques creux entièrement recouvertes de granulation grossière sont un autre exemple de type supra-régional qui s'est répandu depuis la région méditerranéenne orientale vers l'Europe du Sud-Est, l'Europe Centrale et l'Europe de l'Est.