

# A PERSPECTIVE ON THE DISPLACEMENT OF SOME POPULATIONS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES. THE SPREAD OF SIMILAR FINDS BETWEEN THE CAUCASUS AND THE DANUBE

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## ABSTRACT

This article introduces new discoveries into scientific circulation to help create a pertinent image of the realities of the Istro-Pontic region in the Early Medieval period. Through the method of comparative analysis, new archaeological finds were integrated into a specific chronological horizon. The results of the study confirm references in written sources that Dobrudzha was, at a certain time, the focus of attention of some nomadic populations who passed through Dobrudzha or settled here.

**Key words:** 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c., bronze horseman-amulet, hair braid disc, belt ornaments, steppe peoples, Dobrudzha

## Introduction

Political reasons and the demands of subsistence living led some populations to move east to west at the beginning of the Middle Ages. For several centuries, the space between the Caucasus and the Danube was traversed by warrior groups sent as an avant-garde to open the way for the movement of nomadic groups and to identify optimal territories for them to establish camps. These warriors were soon followed by the bulk of their peoples, and each of these peoples bringing with them new material goods and traditions.

Due to its geographical position, the territory of modern Romania was on the routes followed by numerous populations who migrated to the Pannonian Plain, northern areas of the Balkan Peninsula, and Constantinople. With the “brand” of the former territory of the Byzantine Empire and owning land suitable for raising herds, Dobrudzha attracted steppe populations from north of the Black Sea who left their marks on the population, culture, and history of the province. From an archaeological point of view, artifacts different from those specific to the Dobrudzhan cultural environment reveal the presence of these newcomers. Analysis of the frequency and spread of similar finds in the defined region (Caucasus – Danube) allows migrating groups’ starting locations or temporary camps to be delimited and some directions of their movements to be traced.

### About artifacts and possible carriers

In Dobrudzha, metal artifacts provide good proof of the presence of nomadic populations or of the penetration of objects specific to their culture. Two, bronze-cast anthropo-zoomorphic amulets are distinguishable among such artifacts. They represent the first discoveries of this type and unfortunately lack an archaeological context. A third such anthropo-zoomorphic amulet was recently found during preventive excavations and remains unpublished.

The first pendant amulet was found in Constanța County north of Hagieni. It is intact, with a height of 3.6 cm, width of 3.5, and thickness of 0.19. It depicts a stylized rider on a horse facing left. Only the front half of the horse is depicted, and it has a well-highlighted mane, long neck, and higher and perforated ear. With an elegant posture, the rider holds the horse's mane or reins with his right hand. On his head he wears a sharp helmet with a nose guard. He is armed with a sword that is clearly distinguished by its guard and has pointed toes. The amulet's reverse side is slightly concave in the area of the rider's chest and head. The amulet has a clear outline with rounded edges and a smooth surface (fig. 1: 1).

The second amulet-pendant was found in Constanța County in Cobadin. It is fragmentary with a height of 2.9 cm, a width of 3.34, and a thickness of 0.18. The horse's front legs are broken. This second amulet shows a stylized rider on the horse facing left. The horse has a long neck and short ear. The rider keeps his arms raised and bent at his temples to form two holes that could be used to hang the amulet. The rider's left leg, weakly highlighted against the horse's body, is bent at the knee. The rider has a broad torso and is not armed with a sword; the slight highlighting of the chest area could suggest a woman rather than a man (fig. 1: 2).

Exact analogies for the two anthropo-zoomorphic amulets that come from Dobrudzha have not been found, but many finds of this type are known from the Lower Danube area. Three of them come from Romania and so north of the Danube. All are fortuitous discoveries that lack an archaeological context. One of these anthropo-zoomorphic amulets was found in Buzău County at Stăvărăști on the western side of Lake Amara (Ioniță 2008, 453 – 454, fig. 1). Another comes



Fig. 1. Bronze horseman-amulets discovered near Hagieni (1) and at Cobadin (2); hair braid disc found at Războieni (3)  
 Обр. 1. Бронзови амулети с изображение на конник, открити близо до Хагиени (1) и Кобадин (2); диск, украсяващ сплетена коса от Ръзбойени (3)

from the Muntenia Plain, but a more exact location is not known for it (Teodor 1993, 286, fig. 2). The third is from Iași County from Dobrovăș (Bilavschii, Berzovan 2020, 268 – 269). The three amulets can be classified into two different types separated according to the rider's representation: whole or strongly stylized (when there is only a human head on the back of the horse). Based on metallographic analysis of some pieces found in Bulgaria, a strict chronological delimitation of the two types was recently proposed (Валериев 2015a, 435 – 440; Станилов 2017, 608 – 611; Komatarova-Balinova, Penkova 2018, 104 – 106).

From the north of the Danube mouths from the territory delimited by the Prut and the Dniester come 28 anthropo-zoomorphic amulets. Twenty-seven were discovered in the Republic of Moldavia at: Hansca (3 amulets), Păhărnicieni (2), Furceni (1), Lucașeuca (1), Caracușenii Noi (1), Briceni (2), Ocnița (1), Popeștii de Sus (1), Inundeni (1), Bălînți (1), Tătărauca Veche (2), Tarasova (1), Rezeni (1), Schinoșica (1), Porumbrei (1), Cantemir (1), Enichioi (1), Capaclia (1), and Dezghingea (1). For three amulets the place of discovery is unknown (Tentiuc 2010, 225 – 233; Postică, Tentiuc 2014, 45 – 72; Рябцева 2013, 173 – 182). The 28<sup>th</sup> amulet comes from Ukraine from Bolgrad (Рябцева 2013, 182, рис. 1: 3). Another amulet was found in Hungary at Hajdúszoboszló in the middle area of the Danube but still north of the river (Révész 2014b, 448, fig. 7: 2).

Numerous anthropo-zoomorphic amulets were discovered south of the Danube. Thirty-nine come from Bulgaria and are all of the type in which the rider is rendered whole. These were discovered at: Pliska – 3 amulets (Миачев 1979, 145, обр. 22; Милчев 1983, 223, обр. 18; Валериев 2015б, 380 – 381, № 7 – 9), Odartsi – 3 (Дончева-Петкова 1993, 111 – 114, обр. 1, обр. 2; Дончева-Петкова и др. 1999, 120 – 121, Табл. LVIII: 780, 781; Дончева-Петкова 2005, 89, обр. 5: 348; Валериев 2015б, 381 – 382, № 12 – 14), Silistra – 1 (Валериев 2015б, 380, № 6), Novi Pazar – 2 (Аладжов 1983, 277 – 278, обр. 1, обр. 2; Валериев 2015б, 381, № 10, 11), Skala – 1 (Йотов, Атанасов 1998, 120 – 121, Табл. CVI: 362), Tsar Asen – 1 (Атанасов 1993, 53 – 57; Валериев 2015б, 382, № 16), Nove – 1 (Дончева-Петкова 1993, 111; Валериев 2015б, 380, № 4), Ostrov – 1 (Машов 1974, 66; Станилов 1992, 239 – 240, обр. 16; Рябцева 2013, 182, рис. 2: 5; Валериев 2015б, 379, № 1), Gigen – 2 (Аспарухов 1988, 48 – 53, обр. 2, 4; Валериев 2015б, 379, № 2, 3; Станилов 2017, 608, обр. 1: 5, 6), in the Shumen region – 2, in the Varna region – 1, and in North-eastern Bulgaria – 20 (Валериев 2015б, 383 – 387, № 17 – 39). The place of discovery is unknown for one piece in the collection of the Vratsa museum (Валериев 2015б, 380, № 5). Of these 39 amulets from Bulgaria, 9 were found during archaeological excavations (Komatarova-Balinova 2019, 67). Anthropo-zoomorphic amulets on which the rider was represented by a head were also found in Bulgaria; they are in addition to those listed above. For regions south of the Danube, discoveries from Bulgaria join an amulet from Serbia and similar pieces found in Northern Macedonia (Postică, Tentiuc 2014, 45; Валериев 2015б, 394, № 64; Komatarova-Balinova, Penkova 2018, 102).

The spread of anthropo-zoomorphic amulets is wide. The geographic range of such amulet finds is bounded on the east by the riparian territories of the Volga and the North Caucasus and on the west by the Balkan Peninsula and Eastern Central Europe. Chronologically, the amulets are broadly datable to the 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c. (Субботин, Черняков 1982, 160 – 168; Валериев 2015a, 435; Komatarova-Balinova 2019). There is a chronological gap between the finds in the eastern half of the above area, where the amulets were from 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c. contexts, and those in the western half, which mostly date to the 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c. Differences between east and west are also observed in the representation of the equestrian image. In the east, the pieces on which the rider is oriented to the right predominate, and he rarely carries a sword (Субботин, Черняков 1982, рис. 1: 2, 3, 5, 8, 9; Габуев 2005, 48, № 109; Станилов 2017, 610, обр. 2: 1 – 9, 12). In the west, the amulets on which the rider faces left and has a sword on his hip predominate.

The amulet discovered in Dobruddzha north of Hagieni could be included as a variant of type II of the classification made for the Carpatho-Dniester area (Postică, Tentiuc 2014, 49 – 54; Paraschiv-Talmațchi et al. 2022, 248). It is distinguished by two elements: the rider's right hand holds the horse's mane and the animal has no back. At the same time, we find that the position of the rider and the mouth of the horse have similarities with pieces discovered in Northern Caucasus at Terskaya, Rim-gora, and Lunacharskiy, near Kislovodsk (Плетнёва 1981, 181, рис. 64: 96, 102, 110; Габуев 2005, 48, № 109; Албергова, Ковалевская 2011, 293, рис. 8; Станилов 2017, 610, обр. 2: 4 – 6). So, it may be possible that the anthropo-zoomorphic amulet from Hagieni represents a variant of the transition from the amulets specific to the eastern part of the specified area to those existing in the west (Paraschiv-Talmațchi et al. 2022, 248). On the piece from Hagieni, however, the sword is present. In the literature, amulets with left-handed horsemen armed with swords are considered to be of Western origin, an innovation of a North Caucasian model in the Carpatho – Dniester – Balkan region (Postică, Tentiuc 2014, 52).

The anthropo-zoomorphic amulet from Cobadin has analogies with four pieces from Bulgaria. The broad body of the rider and the arms pointing upwards were observed on two amulets found in Northeastern Bulgaria (Валериев 20156, 384, № 22, 23). The upper portions of these two pieces is missing, however, so we do not know if the rider's arms rested on his temples. Similarities in the rendering of the front of the horse were observed in two pieces discovered at Pliska (Валериев 20156, 380, № 8) and Skala (Йотов, Атанасов 1998, Табл. CVI: 362).

In the North Caucasus in the region of the North Donetsk, the Oskol, and the Middle Don, the amulets showing horsemen come from tombs or other complexes mostly attributed to the Alans. The amulets were correlated with the deceased individuals' positions in warrior and social hierarchies and tribal affiliations (Плетнёва 1967, 176; Афанасьев 1973, 36 – 39; Субботин, Черняков 1982, 162; Албергова, Ковалевская 2011, 277; Postică, Tentiuc 2014, 56). The few anthropo-zoomorphic amulets discovered in an archaeological context on the Lower Danube have been attributed to the Alans (Hansca) and Pechenegs (Pliska and Odartsi). They were dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c. (Аладжов 1983, 277 – 281; Postică 1994, 115; Дончева-Петкова 2005, 93 – 94, 111; Postică, Tentiuc 2014, 57). The cultural and chronological framings for these amulets were based on the characteristics of the complexes in which they were found, the inventory of the complex at Hansca, and the presence in the same context as the amulets found at Pliska and Odartsi of coins from the reigns of John I Tsimiskes – Basil II/Constantine VIII (969 – 1028) and Constantine X Ducas and Eudochia (1059 – 1067).

The lack of archaeological context for the pieces found in Dobruddzha led us to refer to analogies. The ones we identified had similarities, but none were identical to the examples from Dobruddzha. Based on these analogies, we consider that the anthropo-zoomorphic amulets found near Hagieni and Cobadin belong to the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c. The dating of the piece from Cobadin can be supported by monetary discoveries in the area (Custurea 2000, 136, No. 25; Custurea, Adamescu 2013, 497 – 498, Nos. 20 – 30). The presence of amulets in Dobruddzha is probably due to some Alan warriors who were keepers of old traditions. They would have arrived in the area either in the context of Byzantine-Bulgarian conflicts with other populations (Russians, Pechenegs, etc.) as allies of one of the two camps or after these conflicts during the settlement of other nomadic groups. The establishment of groups of Alans north of the Danube in the Prut – Dniester area is assumed for the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. and the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (Postică 1994, 115; Postică, Tentiuc 2014, 57; Komatarova-Balinova, Penkova 2018, 104 – 105). Regarding the appearance of the sword on some amulets, we wonder if it can be correlated with one of the times of change in the Alans warriors' weaponry (Габуев 2005, 10).

Another bronze piece discovered in Dobrudzha that comes from the cultural environment of the steppe populations is similar to discs used to adorn braided hair. It was found by chance in Tulcea County in Războieni so these find circumstances contribute little to the artifact's interpretation. It has a flat reverse and a circular shape with a diameter of 2.43 cm and a thickness of 0.13. It has openwork decoration that depicts a deer or horse almost transformed into a vegetal motif, probably the tree of life (fig. 1: 3). The piece is jewelry that a woman would have worn on her head and it would have been attached to a braided strand of hair or a ribbon (Révész 2014a, 17 – 20; Révész 2014b, 442 – 443).

Due to the style of the piece of jewelry's decoration, we believe that we can attribute it to a Hungarian population. Discs for braided hair with openwork decoration have been found in Hungary at Szentistván (Révész 2014a, 17, fig. 5: 2; Révész 2014b, 452, fig. 4: 1, 2), Tiszaeszlár-Bashalom (Révész 2014b, 453, fig. 5), Eger-Szépásszonyvölgy (Тюрк 2018, 426, рис. 2: 9), Békéscsaba-Erzsébethely (Révész 2014b, 449, fig. 1: 1, 2), Győr-Ménfőcsanak (Révész 2014b, 450, fig. 2: 1), in the Kalocsa or Kecel area (Révész 2014b, 450, fig. 2: 4), at Kunpeszér, Kistokaj-Gerenda, Mándok-Tetenke, Rakamaz, in the Nyíracád-Szentirmay region, and at Vörs-Majori (Révész 2014b, 450, fig. 2: 5 – 7, fig. 3: 1 – 6). Most of these discoveries are concentrated in the north and east of the country. Additionally, four examples have been found that lack provenance (Révész 2014b, 452, fig. 4: 5 – 7). A similar piece was discovered at Moča on the left bank of the Danube in Southern Slovakia (Révész 2014b, 449, fig. 1: 3).

So far, openwork discs have only been discovered in Western Romania, specifically at: Galoşpetreu-Dâmbul Morii (Chidioşan 1965, 238, fig. 6, fig. 7; Dragotă 2014, 41 – 42, fig. 13: 1, 2; Révész 2014b, 449, fig. 1: 5, 6), Alba Iulia – “Rescue Station” (Ciugudean, Dragotă 2002, 41, Nos. 71, 72; Révész 2014b, 450, fig. 2: 2, 3; Dragotă 2014, 41 – 42, fig. 13: 4, 5), Dudeştii Vechi – Pusta Bucova (Bejan, Mare 1997, Pl. I: 5; Bejan, Mare 1998, 323 – 328; Oţa 2008, 83, Pl. 63: 13; Dragotă 2014, 41 – 42, fig. 13: 3), and Sânnicolau Mare (Révész 2014b, 439, 451, fig. 3: 3, 4). Usually, the decoration of the aforementioned pieces includes a horse or fantastic animal intertwined with the tree of life or presented in a vegetal motif that symbolizes the tree of life. Depictions of riders, however, are rare.

Discoveries of openwork discs are common for the Caucasus area, particularly in the Kuban region. These discs were predominantly found in archaeological contexts dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> c. and were attributed to the Alan component of the Saltov culture (Плетнёва 1981, 181, рис. 64; Флёрова 2001; Révész 2014b). It has been observed that these discs were used to adorn the head and were worn as pendants around the neck or used as ornaments for bags, belts, and harnesses (Dragotă 2014, 41; Révész 2014b, 444 – 447; Тюрк 2018, 427). It is worth noting that discs featuring representations of mythical animals and vegetal elements gradually disappear from tombs of the Saltov culture by the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. (Révész 2014b, 444).

The piece discovered at Războieni can be dated to the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> c., if we consider the presence of Hungarians south of the Danube as allies of the Byzantine Empire during the Byzantine-Bulgarian events of 894 – 895 when they reached the walls of the Veliki Preslav fortress (Barnea, Ştefănescu 1971, 30; Spinei 2010, 265; Spinei 1999, 52). Based on analogies, however, it is also possible that the piece belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> c.; openwork discs featuring a mythical creature transformed into the tree of life become scarce towards the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. (Révész 2014b, 448).

The context of the finds in the North Caucasus area leads us to consider the possibility that the openwork disc discovered in Războieni belongs to the Alans' cultural milieu, similar to the two anthropo-zoomorphic amulets. Since the type featuring representations of mythical animals and vegetal elements disappears from Alan tombs by the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> c., the piece from Răz-

boieni may represent a legacy passed down generationally along the route from the Caucasus to the Danube.

The most numerous metal artifacts that indicate the arrival of migratory populations in the Istro-Pontic territory are accessories for belts, arrows, bags, shoes, and horse harnesses. This is not surprising, as a belt adorned with bronze, silver, or gold pieces was not only a fashion statement of the time across a wide geographical area but also reflected the wearer's social status. In the Early Middle Ages, Dobrudzha served as a meeting point between Byzantine society and migrating steppe populations where the belt played a significant role in overall attire. In Byzantine society, along with other symbols a belt adorned with metal pieces showcased the wearer's high social role and prosperity, which is reminiscent of the reign of Emperor Leo I when ornaments featured emeralds and amethysts (Bréhier 1994, 47). Influenced by their own Eastern traditions or European influences (Jettmar 1983, 205 – 232), Nomadic populations adorned their belts with various rich embellishments and quivers of arrows, bags, and shoes with appliques, buckles, and belt ends. In Hungarian society, for instance, belts with gaskets were considered a sign of rank (Spinei 1999, 25; Révész 2014a, 10 – 11) while for Bulgarians belts initially served as a distinguishing feature for warrior leaders and later defined a certain social status (Дончева 2013, 163; Рашев и др. 2014, 102 – 107; Paraschiv-Talmațchi et al. 2014, 182). The elite of nomadic populations paid special attention to horse harness decorations and incorporated appliques and other ornamental pieces to them (Révész 2014a, 58, fig. 45), some of which had similar typologies to metal additions to belts.

Archaeological research and fortuitous discoveries over the past two decades have significantly increased the number of these artifacts in the territory of Dobrudzha, thereby substantially altering our understanding of the presence of migrant populations in the region. Previous discoveries from sites such as Dinogetia-Garvăn (Barnea 1967, 293 – 300), Isaccea (Barnea, Mitrea 1959, 470 – 471, fig. 10: 12), Capidava (Diaconu 1958, 235 – 238, fig. 118: 5), Păcuiul lui Soare (Diaconu 1972, 154 – 160), and Histria (Зирпа 1963, 400, рис. 29: 10) have now been supplemented by findings from Hârșova, Adamclisi (Paraschiv-Talmațchi et al. 2014, 170 – 180), Tufani (Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2018), Oltina (Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Custurea 2018), Valu lui Traian, Lipnița, Cochirleni, and Târgușor (fig. 2). The number of artifacts has also increased at Capidava and Isaccea. Additionally, there is a substantial group of fortuitous discoveries from Dobrudzha that lack exact find locations.

Most of these artifacts are appliques and are primarily made of bronze. They were created through casting in molds and stamping techniques. These appliques' shapes are diverse (fig. 3), and their decoration is achieved through embossing or incising. When attaching them to the belt, they were fastened using rivets with washers or nails, which were bent after the pieces were secured onto the leather support. Only a few of them have an ear for hanging on their reverse side.

These appliques can be divided into several groups according to shape and decoration. The largest group is composed of cordiform appliques of different sizes that can have: a smooth surface, an incised border, a border of slightly embossed short lines, a central or base cordiform openwork, a circular openwork towards the top and two protrusions at the base, a profiled central medallion, various decoration incised in the field of the piece, anthropomorphic decoration, and a “palmette” type relief decoration. They may have a semicircular cut at the base and a protrusion at the top or more arranged laterally and at the base, thus presenting, on the whole, multiple and varied aspects. This group of cordiform appliques date broadly to the 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c., but some models, such as those with “branch” type decoration, generally belong to the 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c. and are frequently found in 10<sup>th</sup> c. contexts. Appliques with a “palmette” ornamental motif type have a good presence in levels of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. but are also sporadically discovered in contexts from the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. or beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. (Barnea 1967, 294; Плетньов, Павлова 1994/1995, 40 – 89; Мурашева 2000).

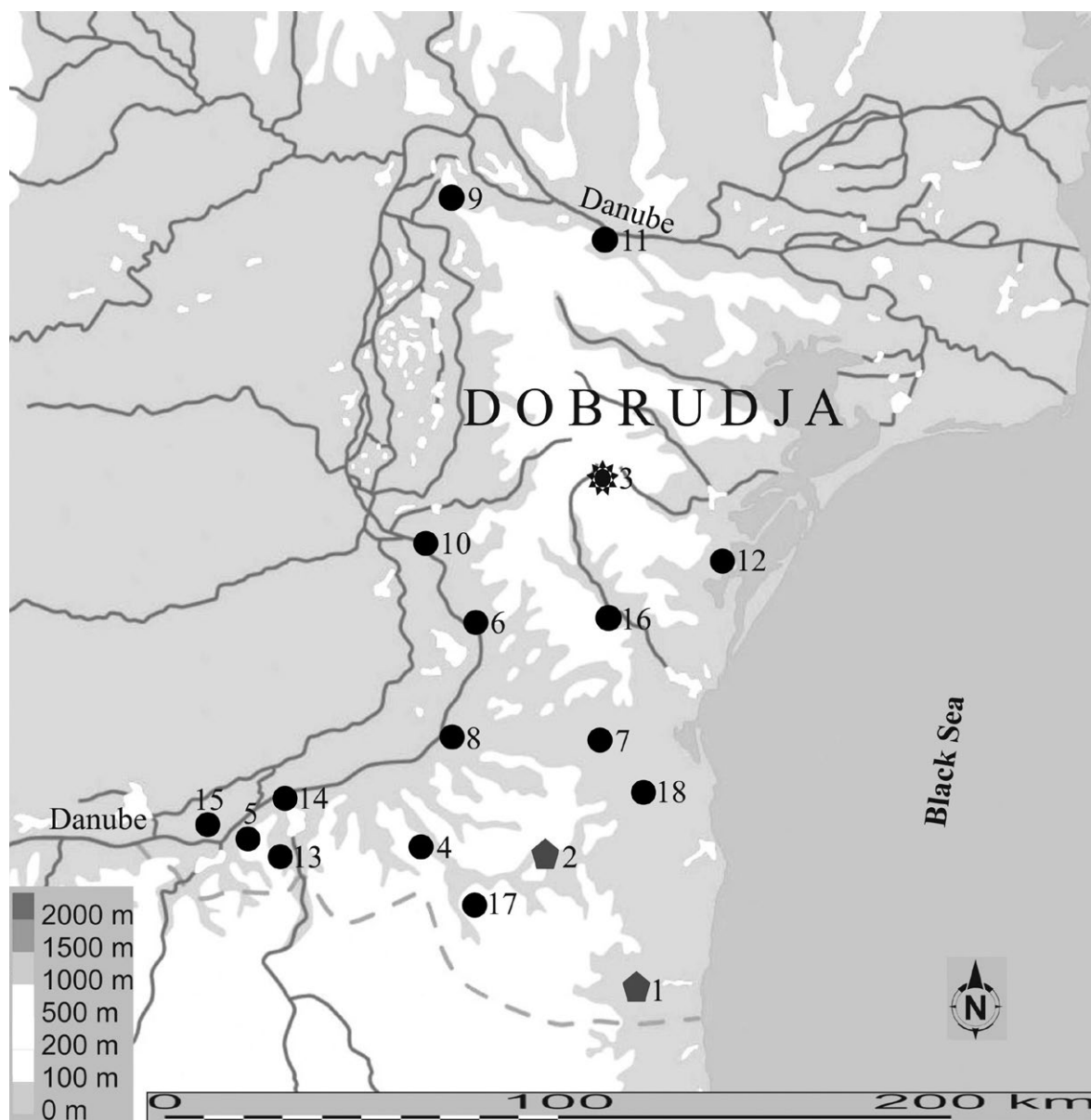


Fig. 2. Territorial distribution of bronze horseman-amulets (▲), hair braid disc (✱), and belt ornaments (●) discovered in Dobrudzha: 1. Hagieni; 2. Cobadin; 3. Războieni; 4. Adamclisi; 5. Canlia; 6. Capidava; 7. Castelu; 8. Cochirleni; 9. Dinogetia-Garvă; 10. Hârşova; 11. Isaccea; 12. Histria; 13. Lipniţa; 14. Oltina; 15. Păcuiul lui Soare; 16. Târgușor; 17. Tufani; 18. Valu lui Traian

Обр. 2. Териториално разпространение на откритите в Добруджа бронзови амулети с изображение на конник (▲), диск за украса на коса (✱) и коланни апликации (●): 1. Хагиени; 2. Кобадин; 3. Ръзбойени; 4. Адамклиз; 5. Канлия; 6. Капидава; 7. Кастелу; 8. Кохирлени; 9. Диногетия-Гарван; 10. Хършова; 11. Исакча; 12. Истрия; 13. Липница; 14. Олтина; 15. Пъкюл луй Соаре; 16. Търгушор; 17. Туфани; 18. Валу луй Траян

The spreading area of cordiform appliques is wide. The variant with a smooth surface, present in Dobrudzha at Adamclisi, Dinogetia-Garvă, and Cochirleni, has been mentioned in scholarship on sites in Mongolia, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary (Barnea 1967, 295 – 296, fig. 173: 8; Мурашева 2000, 28, рис. 29: 3Б, 3В; Бонев, Дончева 2011, 209 – 210, Табл. XXXVI: 279 – 291). The pieces with an incised border or a border made of short embossed lines, found in Dobrudzha at Adamclisi, Cochirleni, and Oltina, have analogies from the territory of Bulgaria, at Botevo, Debrene, Grozdyovo, Novakovo, Odartsi, Pliska, Rogachevo, Samotino, and Suvo-

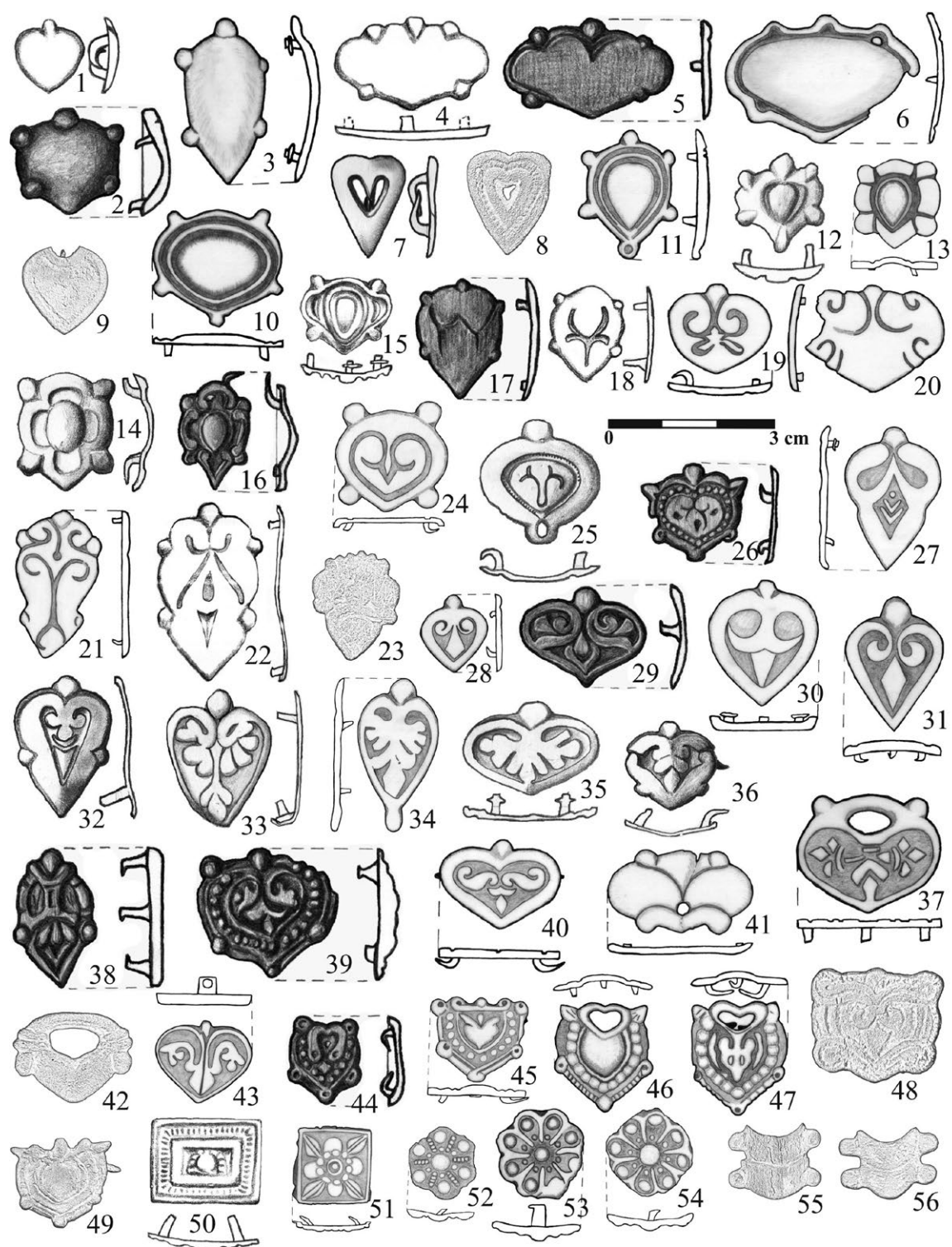


Fig. 3. Belt ornaments discovered in Dobruzhia at: Adamclisi (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 – 15, 18 – 25, 27, 28, 30 – 37, 40, 41, 43, 45 – 47, 50 – 54); Cochirleni (48); Hârșova (49); Olțina (8, 9); Tufani (2, 5, 16, 17, 26, 29, 38, 39, 44); Valu lui Traian (55) and passim (42, 56)  
 Обр. 3. Коланни апликации, открити в Добруджа: Адамклизис (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 – 15, 18 – 25, 27, 28, 30 – 37, 40, 41, 43, 45 – 47, 50 – 54); Кохирлени (48); Хършова (49); Олтина (8, 9); Туфани (2, 5, 16, 17, 26, 29, 38, 39, 44); Валулуй Траян (55) и passim (42, 56)

rovo, but also from Russia, and the heart-shaped openwork applique, found at Adamclisi, has analogies from Bulgaria (at Pernik, Vetren, Zlatar, and Novosel) and in Hungary (Плетньов, Павлова 1994/1995, 42 – 45, Табл. X – XIII; Мурашева 2000, 31, рис. 35; Бонев, Дончева 2011, 227, Табл. XLVII: 514, 515; Дончева 2013, 160, Табл. III: 9 – 16).

Cordiform appliques with a profiled central medallion and various incised decoration in the field of the piece were discovered in Dobrudzha at Adamclisi, Cochirleni, Dinogetia-Garvăn, Isaceea, Oltina, Păcuiul lui Soare, and Tufani. Similar pieces were found in Bulgaria at Novosel, Odartsi, Pliska, Skala, Starmen, Suvorovo, and Zlatar (Плетньов, Павлова 1994/1995, 49, 54 – 63, Табл. XV, Табл. XVI, Табл. XX, Табл. XXI, Табл. XXIII – XXVIII; Йотов, Атанасов 1998, 313, Табл. CXIV: 446 – 448; Дончева-Петкова и др. 1999, 105 – 106, Табл. L: 667, 668, 671 – 676, Табл. LII: 677, 679; Бонев, Дончева 2011, Табл. XXXV: 260 – 271), in the Republic of Moldova at Echimăuți, in Slovakia at Galanta-Matúškovo and Sládkovičovo, and in Hungary at Tarcál, Karos, Hokokmedi, and Ladanibene-Benepusta (Točík 1992, 151, obr. 95: 16, 18, 158, obr. 102: 3; Плетньов, Павлова 1994/1995, 48; Рябцева 2013, 172, рис. 1: 18 – 21, рис. 3: 31 – 42; Révész 2014a, 108, fig. 4ée).

We did not find exact similarities to the anthropomorphic appliques (fig. 3: 23). Less exact similarities can be observed when they are compared to pendant-masks from the 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c. discovered in Russia (Мурашева 2000, 22, 46, рис. 64: 1, 2).

Gaschets with an embossed palmette decoration, simple or embedded in various compositions that can be complex, are present over a wide area since many populations included them in their clothing. In the Istro-Pontic territory, they were found at Adamclisi, Capidava, Cochirleni, Oltina, Păcuiul lui Soare, Tufani, and Valu lui Traian. Similar findings have been reported in Russia at Smolensk and in the Caucasus area, Ukraine at Kiev, the Republic of Moldova at Echimăuți, Romania at Periam, Bulgaria at Botevo, Dobroplodno, Novakovo, Novosel, Odartsi, Ovech, Pliska, Samotino, Skala, Suvorovo, and Veliki Preslav, Serbia at Novi Banovich, Hungary at Nagyösz, Puszta-Reketrye, Nagyürü, and Öcsödi, and Slovakia at Sha'a (Točík 1992, 126, obr. 75: 14; Плетньов, Павлова 1994/1995, 167 – 184, Табл. XXXI – XLIII; Станилов 1995, 116, обр. 5: 48 – 50; Йотов, Атанасов 1998, 108 – 109, Табл. CXIV: 436 – 439; Мурашева 2000, 37, рис. 44: 1, 2; Ота 2008, 126; Бонев, Дончева 2011, 213 – 215, Табл. XXXIX: 334 – 354, Табл. XL: 355 – 376; Рябцева 2013, 183, рис. 1: 22, 27, рис. 3: 47 – 50).

Far fewer in number compared to the previous group, shield-like sconces make up the second largest group of appliques. Usually of a medium size, they can have a cordiform appearance and a smooth central medallion, a cordiform aspect and central medallion decorated with incised vegetal motif or a palmette type “tree” in relief, a pentagonal shape and slightly profiled central medallion with embossed decoration, and edges brought slightly inward in the middle area and at the bottom to form a large bulb. In general, the shield-like sconce has between four and eight symmetrical arranged protrusions. Shield-like appliques were found at Adamclisi, Cochirleni, Hârșova, Oltina, and Tufani. They belong to levels dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> c., but there are specimens that have also been found in contexts from the first decades of the 11<sup>th</sup> c.

Shield-like appliques were discovered over a wide area; they are present in the Middle and Lower Danube but also in territories along the Northern Black Sea coast. We mention here those from Romania (at Alba Iulia), Bulgaria (from the Kishishlika fortress near Avren and at Dobroplodno, Izvornik, Novosel, Popina, Veliki Preslav, Silistra, Skala, Sredishte, and Vinita), the Republic of Moldova (at Bădragii Vechi), and Russia (in the Kalinin, Mogilev, and Petersburg regions) (Станилов 1993, 150, обр. 6; Плетньов, Павлова 1994/1995, 185 – 186, Табл. XLIV, Табл. XLV; Йотов, Атанасов 1998, 109, Табл. CXIV: 442 – 444; Spinei 1999, 312, fig. 59: 4 – 10;

Мурашева 2000, 39, рис. 47: 1А – 1, 1А – 2; Dragotă 2006, 140, Pl. 27: 1, 2, Pl. 54: 13; Бонев, Дончева 2011, Табл. 34).

A relatively small number of pieces form the group of appliques with geometric shapes. They are small or medium in size and are rectangular, square, and circular. Their surface is smooth or embossed, and a few are openwork. They were found at Adamclisi and Oltina. Chronologically, this group falls in the 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> c., the rectangular ones being present in the levels from the 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> c.

Analogies for geometrically shaped appliques were found in Bulgaria and Russia (Станилов 1991, Табл. 3: 12 – 15; Плетнёв, Павлова 1994/1995, 133 – 134, Табл. I: 2, 3, 14 – 16, Табл. IV: 60 – 67; Дончева-Петкова и др. 1999, 105, Табл. L: 657; Мурашева 2000, 26, 55; Аладжов, Григоров 2009, 185 – 190; Константинов 2015, 210, обр. 5: 19). The rosette appliques appear as a harness decoration in a space between the Middle Danube area in the Avar environment, where they are dated in the 8<sup>th</sup> c. and beginning of the next century, and in the North Caucasus in contexts of the 8<sup>th</sup> c. (Плетнёв, Павлова 1994/1995, 36; Zájbojník 2004, 55, obr. 23: 2, 138).

To the aforementioned types, we add two palmette-shaped appliques (10<sup>th</sup> c.) and three moon-shaped ones (late 9<sup>th</sup> c. and the following century). For the first ones, found at Valu lui Traian, the few analogies identified are from the Vladimir region of Russia and Bulgaria at Odartsi (Плетнёв, Павлова 1994/1995, 188, Табл. XLVII: 822, 823; Мурашева 2000, 42, рис. 52: 1r). Regarding the moon-shaped appliques found at Valu lui Traian and Tufani, similar pieces are known from Bulgaria (Бонев 1993, 73, обр. 12e; Плетнёв, Павлова 1994/1995, 129, 190, Табл. XLVIII: 841 – 849; Стоянова, Аладжов 2013, 112, 222, Табл. VII: 7; Константинов 2015, 209, обр. 5: 18), Hungary (Dienes 1956, Pl. LIX: 1 – 50), and Russia (Боталов 2018, 20, рис. 1, рис. 10: 2).

Unlike appliques, buckles and strap ends are attested in fewer numbers. Generally the former are cast in bronze and have small and medium dimensions. By shape they are simple rectangular or have a slightly arched side; have a ring and trapezoidal plate; are lyrate-shaped; have a border divided in two, one rectangular and one circular; or have a triangular plate and ovoid border. Bronze buckles, some with iron spines, were discovered in Dobrudzha at Capidava, Canlia, Castelu, Dinogetia-Garvăn, Histria, Isaccea, and Păcuiul lui Soare, in contexts belonging to the 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c. Lyrate-shaped buckles have a good presence in levels from the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. Their range is between Eastern and Central Europe and are frequently found in Russia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia (Йотов, Атанасов 1998, 107 – 108, Табл. CXIII; Оџа 2008, Pl. 23; Barnea 1967, 297 – 299, fig. 173: 17 – 22; Diaconu 1972, 154 – 158, fig. 62: 6 – 17).

The belt ends discovered in Dobrudzha are mostly made of bronze (rarely gilded, see fig. 4: 6), but some are of lead (fig. 4: 8). They have been cast and have a more-or-less convex face, with a smooth surface or one decorated with incised or embossed motifs (fig. 4). The tip is rounded or sharp, and the fastening on the belt straps that hung at the belts was made with rivets with a washer, nails, or using the rectangular frame present at one of the ends. In this last case, the end of the belt was inserted through this frame then fixed with a rivet or an applique. The dimensions vary; there are small pieces 2.63 cm in length but also large pieces almost 4.5 cm long.

In the Istro-Pontic territory, strap ends were discovered at Adamclisi, Dinogetia-Garvăn, Isaccea, Histria, Oltina, Păcuiul lui Soare, Târguşor, Tufani, and Valu lui Traian (Barnea, Mitrea 1959, 470 – 471, fig. 10: 12; Barnea 1967, 290 – 300, fig. 173: 24 – 26; Diaconu 1972, 154, fig. 63: 1; Paraschiv-Talmaţchi, Custurea 2012). For some pieces the place of discovery is unknown. The broad chronological classification is the 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c., but those with an archaeological context belong to the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> c. We know analogies for the belt ends from Dobrudzha that have been found in Hungary at Kisköre, Slovakia at Nové Zámky, Bulgaria at Odartsi, Samotino, Pliska, Skala, and Veliki Preslav, Ukraine, and Russia (Мурашева 2000, 57 – 69; Плетнёв, Павлова 1992).

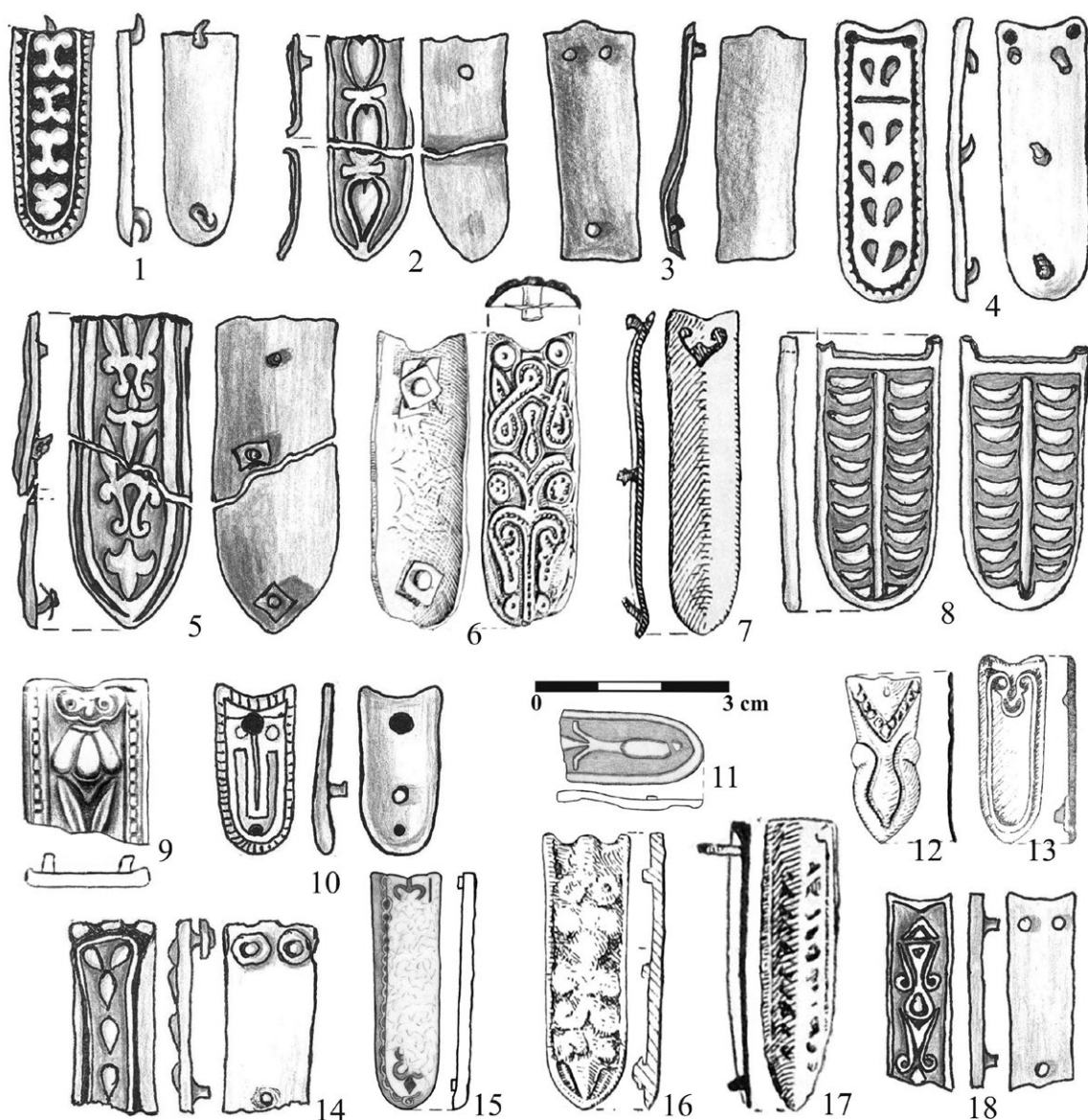


Fig. 4. Strap ends discovered in Dobruddzha at: Adamclisi (9, 11, 15); Dinogetia-Garvăn (6, 7, 12, 16); Isaccea (17); Păcuiul lui Soare (13); Târgușor (3); Tufani (1, 18); Valu lui Traian (14) and passim (2, 4, 5, 8, 10)

Обр. 4. Коланни накрайници, открити в Добруджа: Адамклиси (9, 11, 15); Диногетия-Гарван (6, 7, 12, 16); Исацка (17); Пъкуйул луй Соаре (13); Търгушор (3); Туфани (1, 18); Валу луй Траян (14) и passim (2, 4, 5, 8, 10)

The Early Medieval belt gaskets show great typological variety that was created by the accumulation of specific models from some populations, by cultural influences, and by some artisans' desire to obtain pieces with a unique look. The popularity of decorated belts determined the development of production centers, the specialization of which is highlighted by the presence of molds, lead patterns, and unfinished parts. The situation in Bulgaria near Veliki Preslav is relevant since three metal processing centers have been identified here at Nadarevo, Novosel, and Zlatar (Дончева 2017). Their dynamic activity in the first half and middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. determined the spread of their products in northern Balkan territories and further.

Numerous belt ornaments discovered in Dobrudzha find analogies in these three centers or in the collection of lead models from Northeastern Bulgaria at the museum in Varna. These are products of Bulgarian craftsmen. There are also isolated pieces or ones found in small numbers for which analogies have been found in remote areas. They are out of the current area of use and could reach Dobrudzha with their nomadic carriers.

### **Conclusion**

The geographic spread of the metal parts presented above is wide and coincides with the territories in which nomadic populations gravitated or settled. In the Early Medieval inventories in Dobrudzha, small metal pieces were rare occurrences until recently, which left many questions. New discoveries help to create an adequate image of the Danubian-Pontic realities in the specified period. They show that Dobrudzha was in certain periods of time an area of interest for populations coming from the northeastern Pontic territories and crossing the Dobrudzha or settling there. The mixture of these populations along the long road from the Caucasus to the Danube and through the integration of political groups and alliances makes the cultural-chronological relationship of some artifacts difficult to identify. The adoption of these artifacts and subsequent use by multiple peoples over time led them to be less indicative of cultural identity. In the broad nomadic horizon, however, characteristic features and relevant analogies allow the identification of some artifacts and their attribution, if not to the true bearer, to at least a place of origin.

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## ПОГЛЕД ВЪРХУ ПРИДВИЖВАНЕТО НА НЯКОИ НАРОДИ ПРЕЗ РАННОТО СРЕДНОВЕКОВИЕ. РАЗПРОСТРАНЕНИЕТО НА СХОДНИ НАХОДКИ МЕЖДУ КАВКАЗ И ДУНАВ

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### РЕЗЮМЕ

Статията пуска в научно обращение нови открития, допринасяйки за създаването на по-реална картина на случващото се в Истро-понтийската област през Ранното средновековие. Благодарение на извършения сравнителен анализ новите археологически открития бяха прибавени към един определен хронологически хоризонт.

Металните находки от Добруджа свидетелстват за присъствието на номадски народи тук или за навлизането на предмети, характерни за тяхната култура. Сред тях се открояват два антропо-зооморфни амулета, излети от бронз. Те представляват първите находки от този тип, за съжаление случайни, без археологически контекст. Трети антропо-зооморфен амулет, все още непубликуван, е открит наскоро по време на спасителни разкопки.

Първият амулет произхожда от обл. Констанца, на север от Хагиени. Той е изцяло запазен, с височина 3,6 см, ширина 3,5 см и дебелина 0,19 см. Изобразява стилизиран конник в ход наляво. Представена е само предната половина на тялото на коня – отчетливо подчертана грива, дълъг врат, високо и пробито ухо. Конникът има елегантна осанка. Той държи в дясната си ръка гривата или юздите на коня. На главата си има заострен шлем с предпазител за носа. Въоръжен е с меч с ясно различим предпазител. Върховете на обувките му са заострени. Амулетът е леко вдлъбнат на обратната си страна, в областта, където са гърдите и главата на конника. Има ясен контур със закръглени ръбове и гладка повърхност (обр. 1: 1).

Вторият амулет произхожда от Кобадин, обл. Констанца. Запазен е частично: височина 2,9 см, ширина 3,34 см; дебелина 0,18 см. Предните крака на коня са отчупени. Представено е стилизирано изображение на конник в ход наляво. Конят има дълъг врат и късо ухо. Ръцете на конника са вдигнати и докосват слепоочията му, оформяйки два отвора, които биха могли да се използват за провесване на амулета. Левият крак, слабо очертан върху тялото на коня, е сгънат в коляното. Конникът е с широко тяло, не е въоръжен с меч, а слабото подчертаване в областта на гърдите подсказва, че може би става въпрос за женска фигура (обр. 1: 2).

При датирането на предметите, намерени в Добруджа, поради липсата на археологически контекст са използвани аналогични на тях. Липсата на абсолютно идентични на разглежданите амулети доведе до сравняването им с повече или по-малко подобни на тях. Основавайки се на паралелите, считаме, че антропо-зооморфните амулети, намерени близо до Хагиени и Кобадин, могат да се поставят в X – XI в. Датирането на находката от Кобадин може да се подкрепи от монетите, намерени в района. Вероятно амулетите в Добруджа са принадлежали на алански воители, пазители на старите традиции. Аланите са пристигнали в района покрай византийско-българските конфликти с други народности (руси, печенег и др.), като съюзници на един от лагерите или при заселването на номадски групи тук. Наличието на изображение на меч при някои амулети ни кара да се запитаме дали това не може да се свърже с някои от периодите, при които настъпва промяна във въоръжението на аланските воители.

Друг бронзов предмет, открит в Добруджа и свързан с културата на степните народи, прилича на дисковете за сплитане на коса. Предметът е случайна находка от Ръзбойени, обл. Тулча. Обратната му страна е плоска. Има кръгла форма, диаметър 2,43 см и дебелина 0,13 см. Дискът е ажурен, с изображение на силно стилизирана сърна или кон, което прилича на растителен мотив, вероятно „дърво на живота“ (обр. 1: 3). Това е женско украшение за глава, което е прикачвано към сплетената на плитка коса или към панделка. Поради стила на украсата смятаме, че украшението би могло да е оставено от маджарите. От друга страна, контекстът на находките от Северен Кавказ ни кара да приемем и друга възможност – че откритият ажурен диск от Ръзбойени може да принадлежи към културната среда на аланите, подобно на двата антропо-зооморфни амулети.

Находката от Ръзбойени може да бъде датирана към края на IX в., ако вземем предвид присъствието на маджарите южно от Дунав като съюзници на Византийската империя по време на византийско-българските събития от 894 – 895 г. Съгласно аналогичните предмети може да се датира и през X в. Тук трябва да се отбележи, че са намерени няколко ажурни диска с изображения на митични същества, преобразени в „дърво на живота“, които съществуват чак до края на X в.

Най-многобройните метални артефакти, които свидетелстват за пристигането на номадски народи в Истро-понтиската зона, са апликациите за колани, стрели, чанти, обувки и конска амуниция. Археологическите изследвания и случайните находки през последните две десетилетия значително увеличиха броя на тези артефакти от територията на Добруджа (обр. 2).

Повечето от тези предмети са апликации, изработени предимно от бронз. Те са лети или шамповани. Имат разнообразни форми (обр. 3), а украсата им е изработена чрез изчукване в релеф или е врязана. Прикрепяни са към колана с помощта на нитове и шайби или с гвоздеи, чиито краища са били огъвани от обратната страна на кожения ремък. Само някои от тях имат ухо за закрепване на обратната си страна. Апликациите могат да се разделят на няколко групи според формата и украсата си.

За разлика от апликациите катарамите и коланните накрайници са по-малко на брой. Обикновено катарамите са излети от бронз и имат малки и средни размери. По форма те могат да бъдат: правоъгълни или с леко извити страни; с халка и трапецовидна плочка; лировидни; разделени на две части – една правоъгълна и една кръгла; с триъгълна плочка и овална рамка.

Коланните накрайници, открити в Добруджа, са изработени основно от бронз (рядко са позлатени, вж. обр. 4: 6), а някои са от олово (обр. 4: 8). Те са лети и имат повече или по-малко изпъкнала гладка или украсена с релефни или врязани мотиви лицева повърхност (обр. 4). Краят им е закръглен или заострен. Прикрепянето им към ремъците, които са висели от коланите, е ставало чрез нитове и шайби, гвоздеи или с помощта на правоъгълната рамка в единия им край, през която

е преминавал каишът на колана, а след това са застопорявани с нит или апликация. Размерите им варират: има малки с дължина от 2,63 см, но и големи екземпляри с дължина почти 4,5 см.

Географската област на разпространение на представените по-горе метални предмети е обширна и съвпада с териториите, през които номадските народи са преминавали или където са усядали. Малките метални находки доскоро бяха рядкост в ранносредновековните контексти от Добруджа, оставяйки множество неясни въпроси. Новите открития помагат за създаването на адекватна представа за ситуацията в Истро-понтийския район през посочения период. Те показват, че през определен период Добруджа е била обект на интерес от страна на някои народи, идващи от североизточната понтийска зона, които са преминали или са се заселили тук. Смесването на тези народи по дългия път от Кавказ до Дунав чрез обединяване на политически групи и съюзи затруднява определянето на културната принадлежност и хронологията на някои артефакти. Възприемането и употребата им от един или друг народ през този период води до загубата им на отличителни белези. В широкия номадски хоризонт обаче характерните белези и съответните паралели позволяват идентифицирането на някои артефакти и свързването им, ако не с истинските им носители, то поне с мястото им на произход.

**Ключови думи:** VIII – XI в., бронзови амулети с конник, ажурни дискове за коса, коланни апликации, степни народи, Добруджа