

S. M. Agulnikov—A. V. Simonenko

A LATE SARMATIAN BRIDLE SET FROM MOLDOVA

In 1985 the Budzhak expedition of the Moldovan Academy of Sciences examined a barrow group situated on the interflow of Yalpug and Lunguca rivers, 3.5 km to the south-west from village Kazaklia (district Tchadyr-Lunga, Republic of Moldova). There were barrows of different ages found in the group, from the Early Bronze to the Middle Age. The assemblage examined in this article was uncovered in barrow 14.

After long years of intensive ploughing the diameter of the mound of the barrow was 36 m and its height was 0.76 m from the original surface (fig. 1. 1). There were two burials uncovered in the barrow: No.1 (introduced, Medieval grave) (Fig. 1. 3)¹ and No.2 (primary, Late Sarmatian grave).

Grave 2 was situated in the centre of the area under the mound (fig. 1. 2). The ground thrown out of the grave surrounded the shaft by two semicircles from the east and west. Their maximum length was 7.5 m, maximum thickness: 0.4 m. The burial was made in a catacomb. The NNW-SSE oriented shaft was 3.5 × 1.9 m big, rectangular, the level of the bottom was 1.9 m from the original surface. A horse skull was found in the south-eastern part of the shaft on the bottom of it. A 2.2 m long, 2.8 m high, 0.4 m wide stair was made at the entrance of the niche. The latter was dug in the northern wall of the shaft. The rectangular shaped niche was oriented NNW-SSE, its size: 3,5 × 2,2 m, its depth was 4.7 m from the level of the original surface. On the bottom of the niche dark brown remains of an organic underlay (wood or leather) were recorded.

The burial was robbed out. Bones of an adult person, horse and cattle were found on different levels. In the north-western part of the niche, 0.5 m from its wall, on the bottom, parts of the bridle set were uncovered: a bit (1), decorations of the harness (2), buckles (3) and a clamp (4).

1. *The iron bit.* Its links have a round section, 1 cm diameter. The ends of the links were covered with silver. The rings were made out of silver, round in section, 4.8 cm diameter and 0.6 cm in section. The strap distributors of two types were freely attached to them²:

a. *The small segment-shaped ones.* They were made of two silver plates with a golden one covering them. It was divided by thin cases into three sections: a trian-

gular one in the centre and two half-oval ones on the edges. The recesses were filled with red enamel with golden foil under it. The plates were connected by two silver rivets (fig. 2. 1).

b. *The rectangular ones.* Similarly to the latter pieces they were made of two 6 × 1.2 cm big silver plates covered with a golden one. It was divided by recesses into two vertical rows of triangulars (14 in each row). Three pairs of round recesses were situated in the middle and at the edges. Triangular and round recesses were filled with red enamel of different tones with golden foil under it. The whole construction was connected by three pairs of rivets (fig. 2. 2).

2. *The decoration of harness* consisting of two types of plates made in the same technique as plates described before:

a. *The round ones*, 2 cm diameter. The upper golden plate was divided into 4 sectors with a four-petal rosette inside. Two petals were filled with a bluish grey enamel, the rest of the recesses – with red enamel of different tones (fig. 3).

b. *The figural ones* that served as cheekplates. They were made in the same technique as previous pieces. There is a rhombus in the centre of the composition. The edges of the rhombus were divided into 12 0.5 × 0.5 cm big square recesses. The square formed in the centre was divided by diagonals into 4 triangular recesses. Two of them were filled with bluish grey enamel, the rest – with red enamel of different tones. Under the rhombus there is an oval plate surrounded by 10 semicircular recesses. In the middle of the plate there is a circle divided by diagonals into four triangular sectors. Two of them were filled with bluish grey enamel, the rest – with red enamel of different tones. The rest of the surface of the plate consists of 15 triangular and 1 square recesses filled with red enamel of different tones. Above the rhombus there is a volute-shaped figural plate divided into 16 triangular and segment-shaped recesses that were filled with bluish grey (in the centre) and different tones of red (at the edges) enamel. All the three elements of the composition were based on one 6 cm long plate (fig. 3.2).

3. *The silver buckles:*

a. The buckle with an oval thickened frame with a mobile rectangular belt-plate and tongue with a stair-

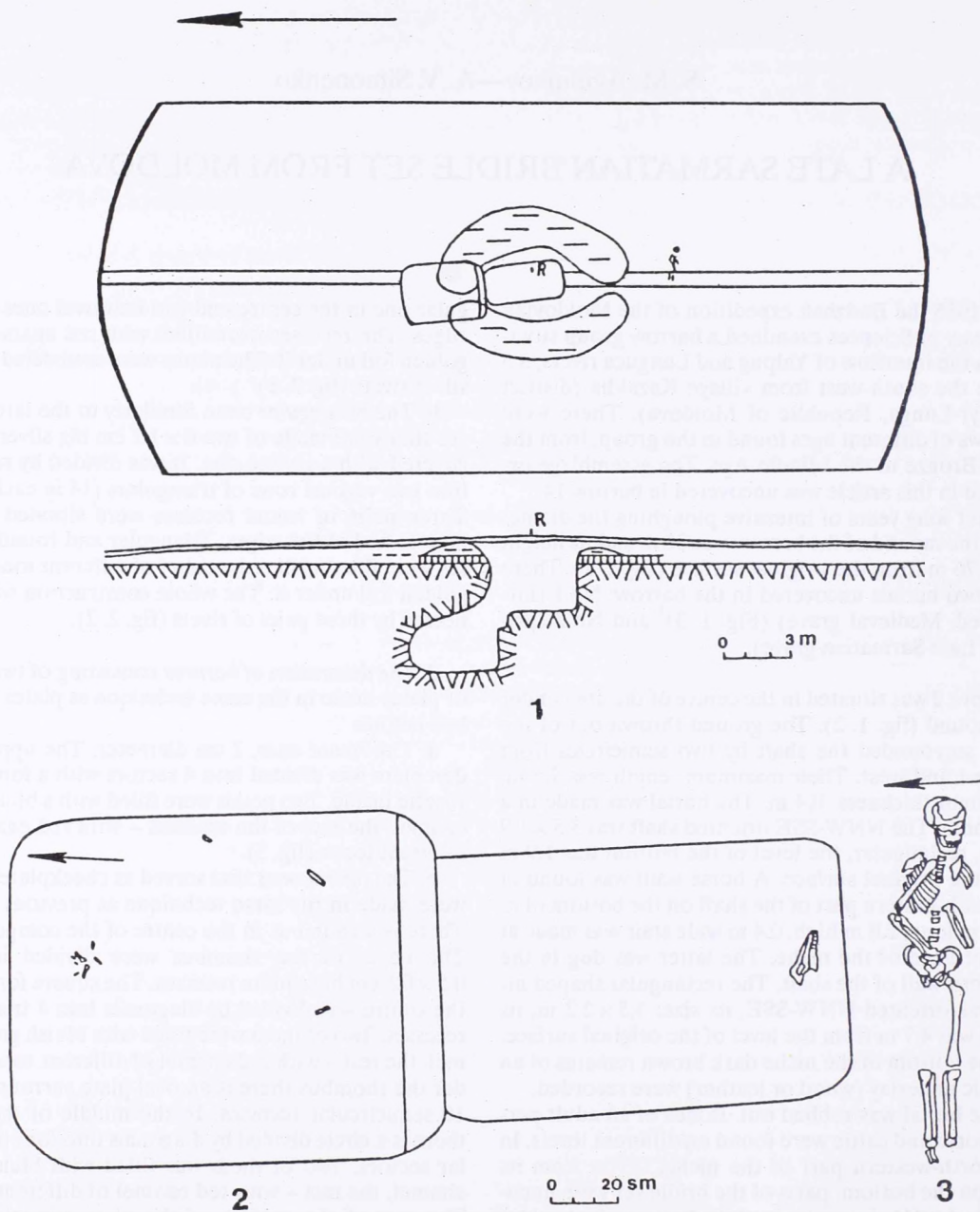


Fig. 1 1: Plan and section of the barrow 14; 2: Grave 2 (plan); 3: Grave 1

shaped end bending on the frame. The sizes of the frame are: 1.9×1.2 cm, the ones of the belt-plate are: 1.2×0.9 cm, the tongue is 1.5 cm long (fig. 4. 2).

b. The *buckle* of the same type, but smaller in size and with a plain tongue. The sizes of the frame are 1.5×1.3 cm, that of the belt-plate: 1×0.8 cm, the tongue is 1.2 cm long (fig. 4. 3).

c. The *buckle* with an oval, thickened frame and

mobile oval belt plate without a tongue. The sizes of the frame are 2×1.7 cm, that of the belt-plate: 1.5×1.4 cm (fig. 4. 1).

d. The *buckle* of the same type placed in the centre of a 8-shaped belt-plate. The lower part of the latter is rectangular. The sizes of the frame are 1.5×1.3 cm, that of the 8-shaped part of the belt plate are 1.8×1.2 cm, that of the rectangular part: 1.6×1 cm (fig. 4. 4).

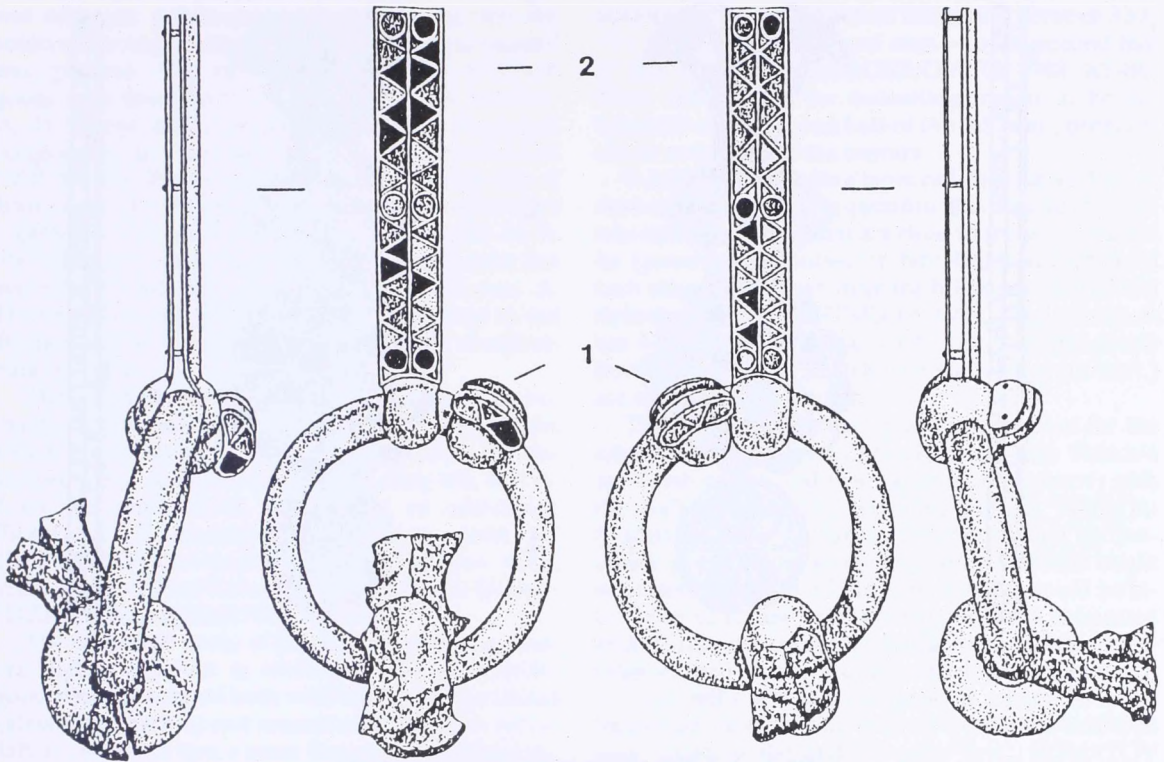


Fig. 2 1-2: Strap distributors M=1:1

The belt-plates of all the buckles are connected with pairs of silver rivets.

4. The rectangular silver *clamp* with an iron rivet. The sizes are: 0.8×0.5 cm (fig. 4. 5).

Thus, the barrow 14 contained a burial of a noble horseman with decorations characteristic for the Great Migration Period that were made in polychromic style (cloisonné technique). A lot of works deal with the finds of this style in the nomadic graves of South-Eastern Europe. So the following brief review on the development of the style wishes to draw attention to some elements important for the further research.

Place of origin. It has been determined by M. I. Rostovtseff as the Bosporan Kingdom (ROSTOVITSEFF 1925, 557). This hypothesis was supported by I. P. Zsetskaia (ZASETSKAIA 1986, 25-26). A. K. Ambroz had another point of view. He believed that the cloisonné style was formed at the Middle Danube region

in the times of Attila and on his territory, and then "as a ready made style" was brought to Bosporan Kingdom (AMBROZ 1966, 15). Another version was suggested by N. A. Bazhan and M. B. Shchukin. They think that this style was formed at Transcaucasian region among Iberian jewellers, then it was taken by Sarmatians who introduced it to the Bosporan and later to the Hunnic craftsmen (BAZHAN, SHCHUKIN 1990, 92). The point of view of A. K. Ambroz was criticized (ZASETSKAIA 1986, 25-26), mainly because of the chronological disaccord (Bosporan finds of this style are earlier than the Danubian "prototypes"). We believe that the archaeological arguments proposed by N. A. Bazhan and M. B. Shchukin make their hypothesis very reliable.

Time of origin. Tradition of making golden goods with colourful stone and enamel inlays has appeared in North Pontic region already in Hellenistic times. In Roman Age the Sarmatian polychromic "turquoise-golden" style and Roman enamel works became widely spread. But they have only semantic similarity

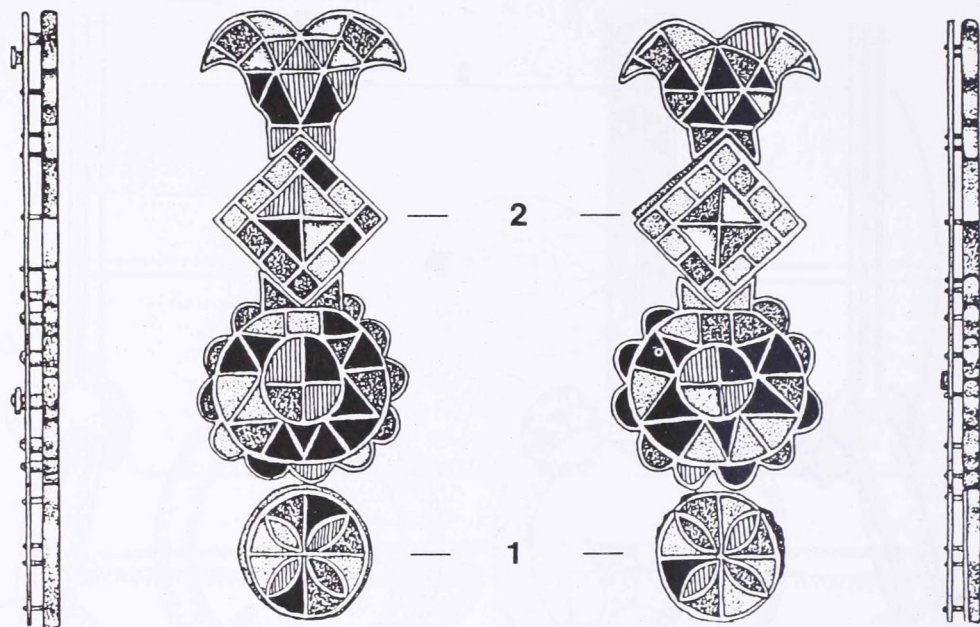


Fig. 3 1-2: Plates of the bridle decoration M=1:1

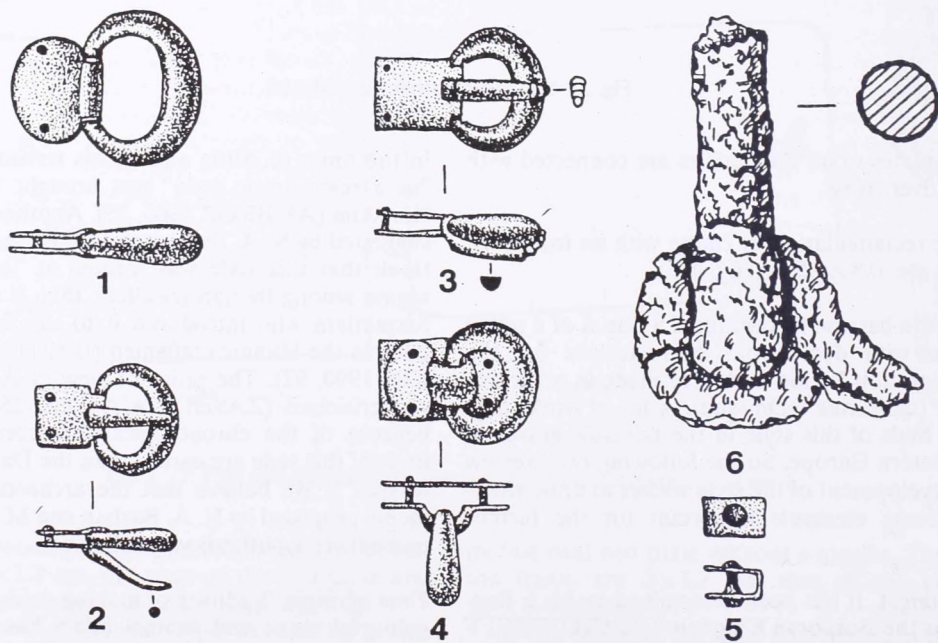


Fig. 4 1-4: Silver buckles; 5: Silver clamp; 6: Iron bit M=1:1

with the style in question, because their technique was different: polychromic inlays were put into the soldered recesses (cabochon technique) and enamel was grooved. The earliest examples of cloisonné goods were found in the burials of the 2nd–3rd cent. A. D. of the noble cemeteries Armaziskhevi and Aragvispiri in Georgia (BAZHAN–SHCHUKIN 1990, 84–85). The assemblage found at the mouth of Rioni river in Ureki which is a little younger (late 3rd – early 4th cent. A. D. after N. A. Bazhan and M. B. Shchukin) contained goods decorated in the same but more developed style. At the end of the 4th cent. A. D. the cloisonné style was widely represented in the Bosporan jewellery (burials from Kertch, Hospitalnaia street etc.).

The goods of this style were rarely found in the nomadic noble burials of pre-Hunnic period in the North Pontic steppes. These are finds from the destroyed grave in Tanais (late 3rd – early 4th A. D.), from the synchronous assemblages of cemeteries Tsentralni IV, Komarov II, Zolotyie gorki IV (BEZUGLOV–ZAHAROV 1989, 59) at Don basin, grave I barrow 20 of Kubei cemetery at Lower Danube (DZIGOVSKI–SUBBOTIN 1990, 24).

The cloisonné works of pre-Hunnic and later times are slightly different in technique. The pre-Hunnic goods were decorated both with semi-precious stones (almandine, garnet) and enamel and glass. It is necessary to point out that a more liberal choice of the colour of the inlays was in custom at that time which was noted by L. A. Matzulevich (MATZULEVICH 1934, 65). The cloisonné works of Hunnic times were encrusted only by red stones of different tones. Golden foil was used as underlay generally.

The decoration of the bridle from Kazaklia belongs to the IVth stylistic group by I. P. Zasetkaia. This is a whole cloisonné where ornaments were composed by the inlays of different forms, the elements of ornament were triangular, rhombi, squares, heart- and kidney-shaped figures (ZASETSKAIA 1982, 20–22). Such works were in use since the late 4th till the first half of the 5th cent. A. D. (ZASETSKAIA 1982, 26). As to their construction the bit from Kazaklia is surprisingly close to the one (IVth group) from burial in Kertch robbed in 1904 (ZASETSKAIA 1982, 26, fig. 6. 2). It has also got rectangular strap distributors that appeared not before 4th cent. A. D. and a rib going along the axis of the ends of the bit. The material of the decorations (enamel) and the blue inlays refer to an earlier time than the 5th cent., because in the Hun Age red colour of inlays was dominant.

The buckles make it possible to correct the date of the assemblage from Kazaklia. They lack the characteristic feature of the 5th century buckles – the long tongue bending on the frame. On the basis of the form of the frame and the belt-plate, one of them (fig. 4. 2) which has a rectangular belt-plate belongs to the Bug-Danube series (the early version), the second one with an oval belt-plate (fig. 4. 1) – to the Dnieper-Bug

series after E. L. Gorokhovski. The first mentioned buckles were dated by him to the period between 330–370, the second mentioned ones – to the second half of the 4th cent. (GOROKHOVSKI 1988, 85–86). Thus, the date of the assemblage ought to be determined as the second half of the 4th cent., probably closer to the end of the century.

It is difficult to point a more or less close analogy of the bridle decoration in question. But despite of it certain stylistic motives that are close to the set of Kazaklia (protomes of horses or bird heads turned from each other) are known from the bridle sets of the IVth stylistic group (ZASETSKAIA 1982, 20, fig. 5. 1). It has been already mentioned before that the pieces from Kazaklia and Kertch (the end of the 4th cent.) are constructively similar.

The construction of the grave is important for the ethnical determination of the Kazaklia find. This is a catacomb of the IInd type (after K. F. Smirnov) with the shaft and niche situated along one axis. Taking into consideration the barrow funeral rite and chronological position, the assemblage from Kazaklia ought to be determined as a Late Sarmatian. It would be interesting to review briefly some questions connected with Sarmatian catacomb burial rite, especially because of their close relation to the object under study.

Catacombs of type II are the most numerous in the Sarmatian culture. The earliest burials of this type were dated to the 2nd–1st cent. B. C. (IGNATOV 1986, 65; BERLIZOV 1993, 126) and concentrated mainly in the interfluence of Don and Volga and at Kuban region. The catacombs of this type sporadically spread in the 1st–2nd cent. A. D. on the whole territory of the Sarmatian culture (SIMONENKO–LOBAI 1991, 37), sometimes composing large cemeteries (Zolotoie kladbishche at Kuban). Catacomb graves became more numerous in the Late Sarmatian times (2nd–4th cent. A. D.) and they became almost the basic type of the graves at the final stage of the culture (the second half of the 3rd–4th cent. A. D.). The separate areas of the concentration of the Late Sarmatian catacomb graves can be marked at following territories: Stavropol region, the interfluence of Don and Sal, the basins of Sal and partly Manych rivers (BEZUGLOV–ZAHAROV 1988, 21), the right bank of Lower Don (Zhuravka cemetery etc.), the interfluence of Orel and Samara (Dmukhailovka etc.), Lower Danube-Budzhak steppe (Vladichen, Kubei and other cemeteries). The closest chronological and typological analogies of the Kazaklia grave are the catacombs from Vladichen and Kubei situated not far from Kazaklia (DZIGOVSKI–SUBBOTIN 1990, 16–24). In one grave of the Kubei cemetery, by the way, the buckle with cloisonné decorated belt-plate was found. According to E. L. Gorokhovski the Kubei catacombs are dated to the second half of the 4th – early 5th cent. A. D. (GOROKHOVSKI 1991, 35), e.g. in general they are synchronous to the Kazaklia grave. There is no doubt that all these burials belonged to the same

culture and population. On the basis of the written sources it is customary to connect this population to Alans.

After the death of Hermanarich and the defeat of allied armies of Ostrogoths and Visigoths the Huns and Alans who won this war appeared at the Danube in 376. In 378 Alans and Huns were mentioned at Tisza basin (KUZNETSOV 1992, 11). According to a 5th cent. author Paulus Orosius Alania district existed on the left bank of the Lower Danube (KULAKOVSKI 1899, 22–23), and Prut river became to be named Alanus fluvius (VERNADSKY 1944, 132). The concentration of the Late Sarmatian cemeteries dated to this time (Gradeshka, Kurtchi, Kubei, Frikatsei, Vla-

dichen etc.) at the delta of Danube illustrates well the reports of Antique authors. The burial rite of the Kazaklia grave permits us to identify it more or less precisely as Alanic, because the cloisonné style finds examined here were spread widely at this time among the noble of different barbarian tribes. According to M. I. Rostovtseff, this style "became the style of the lords, the dominating class of the population, the style of princely and royal courts, the style of Geizerich, Theodorich, Attila" (ROSTOVTSEFF 1923, 65). The finds of such goods in Late Sarmatian memorials permit us to consider that among these names ought to be the unknown – for us, alas – names of Alanic kings.

Notes

- 1 We are not dealing with this burial here.
- 2 We are not describing separately each of the plates when in pairs because of their absolute identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AMBROZ 1966 A. K. AMBROZ, *Fibuly Iuga Evropeiskoi chasti SSSR*. SAI DI-30. Moskva 1966.
- BAZHAN—SHCHUKIN 1990 N. A. BAZHAN—M. B. SHCHUKIN, *K voprosu o vozniknovenii polihromnogo stilia cloisonné epohi velikogo pereselenia narodov*. ASGE 30 (1930).
- BEZUGLOV—ZAHAROV 1988 S. I. BEZUGLOV—A. V. ZAHAROV, *Mogil'nik Zhuravka i final pozdniesarmatskoi epohi v pravoberezhnom Podonie*. *Izvestia ROMK* 5 (1988).
- BERLIZOV 1993 N. E. BERLIZOV, *O hronologii i tolkovanii podkurgannykh katakomb sarmatskogo vremeni v stepnom Prikubanie i Stavropolie*. in: *Skifia i Bospor*. Novocherkassk 1993.
- DZIGOVSKI—SUBBOTIN 1990 S. N. DZIGOVSKI—L. V. SUBBOTIN, *Sarmatskie drevnosti Dniestro-Dunaiskogo mezhdurech'ia* 3. (preprint). Kiev 1990.
- GOROKHOVSKI 1988 E. L. GOROKHOVSKI, *Hronologia iuvelirnykh izdelii pervoi poloviny I tys.n.e. lesostepnogo Podneprov'ia i iuzhnogo Pobuzh'ia*. Dr.sc. thesis. Kiev 1988.
- GOROKHOVSKI 1991 E. L. GOROKHOVSKI, *Nekotore probleme hronologii Iuga Vostochnoi Evropy pozdnerimskoi epohi – nachala rannego srednevekov'ia*. in: *Problemy vychennia ta ohorony pamiatok arheologii Kyivshchyny*. Kiev 1991.
- IGNATOV 1986 V. V. IGNATOV, *Katakomby sarmatskogo vremeni iz kurganov u st. Hoperskoi*. *KSIA* 186 (1986).
- KULAKOVSKI 1899 IU. KULAKOVSKI, *Alany po svedeniam klassicheskikh i vizantiiskikh pisatelei*. Kiev 1899.
- KUZNETSOV 1992 V. A. KUZNETSOV, *Alany v Zapadnoi Evrope v epohu velikogo pereselenia narodov*. in: *Alany, Zapadnaia Evropa i Vizantia*. Vladikavkaz 1992.
- MATSULEVICH 1934 L. A. MATSULEVICH, *Pogrebenie varvarskogo kniazia v Vostochnoi Evrope*. *IGAIMK* 112 (1934).
- ROSTOVTSEFF 1925 M. I. ROSTOVTSEFF, *Skifia i Bospor: Kriticheskoe obozrenie pamiatnikov literatury i arheologii*. Leningrad 1925.
- ROSTOVTSEFF 1925 M. ROSTOVTSEFF, *Une trouvaille de l'epoque greco-sarmate de Kertch*. *Monuments et memoires piblies par l'Academie des inscriptions et belleslettres*. Fondation E. Piot, v.2., Paris 1923.
- SIMONENKO—LOBAI 1991 A. V. SIMONENKO—B. I. LOBAI, *Sarmaty Severo-Zapadnogo Prichernomoria v I v.n.e*. Kiev 1991.
- VERNADSKY 1944 G. VERNADSKY, *Ancient Russia*. New Haven 1944.

ZASETSKAIA 1982

I. P. ZASETSKAIA, *Klassifikacia polihromnyh izdelii gunnskoj epohi po stilisticheskim dannym*. in: *Drevnosti epohi velikogo pereselenia narodov V–VIII vekov*. Moskva 1982.

ZASETSKAIA 1986

I. P. ZASETSKAIA, *Nekotorye itogi izuchenia hronologii pamiatnikov epohi pereselenia v iuzhnorusskikh stepiah*. ASGE 27 (1986).

Agulnikov, Sergei Mikhailovich
Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of
Moldovian Academy of Sciences,
Chişineu, Moldova

Dr.sc. Simonenko, Alexander Vladimirovich
Institute of Archaeology of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences,
Kiev, Ukraine

