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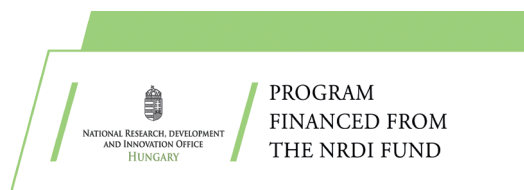
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## THE SOUTHERNMOST EXCEPTIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY FROM THE HUNGARIAN CONQUEST PERIOD: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SEVERAL FINDS FROM THE BAČKA REGION (SERBIA)

Milica RADIŠIĆ<sup>1</sup>  – Viktorija UZELAC<sup>2</sup> 

*The article provides a detailed analysis of the finds from a destroyed Hungarian Conquest Period warrior grave at the site of Mašić Salaš (Stanišić), in the Municipality of Sombor: a gold finger-ring, four gilded belt mounts, and a gold hair ring. The finger-ring, with a massive bezel set with a carnelian gem bearing the simplified representation of a lion, most probably of Sasanian origin, ranks among the most luxurious objects of its kind in the Carpathian Basin and Eastern Europe. Closely related examples of the fragmented belt set have been identified in Russia and Kazakhstan. The grave is associated with a reputable member of the elite who belonged to the first generation of Hungarians conquering the area of today's northern Bačka in the first decades of the 10th century.*

*A tanulmány egy elpusztult honfoglalás kori sír leleteit mutatja be, mely Zombor községben, Mašić Salaš (Stanišić) lelőhelyen került elő. A síregyüttes többek között egy aranygyűrűt, négy aranyozott övveretet és egy arany hajfonatkarikát tartalmazott. A gyűrű a Kárpát-medence és Kelet-Európa honfoglalás kori luxuscikkeinek egyike; a fejét díszítő méretes, stilizált oroszlánt ábrázoló karneol gemma alapján feltehetően Szászánida eredetű. Az övkészletből fennmaradt veretek közeli párhuzamai Oroszország és Kazahsztán területéről ismertek. A temetkezés egy, a honfoglaló magyarok első generációjának elitjéhez tartozó, magas rangú férfi végső nyughelye lehetett, akit a 10. század első évtizedeiben a mai Észak-Bácska területén ért a halál.*

**Keywords:** *finger-ring, carnelian gem, belt mounts, Hungarian Conquest Period, Carpathian Basin, Vojvodina, Eastern Europe*

**Kulcsszavak:** *gyűrű, karneol gemma, övkészlet, övveretek, honfoglaláskor, Kárpát-medence, Vajdaság, Kelet-Európa*

### Introduction

The archaeological heritage of the Hungarian Conquest Period in the Carpathian Basin is characterised by artefacts of an exceptional style, differing significantly from the material remains of all other contemporary cultural spheres in Central Europe and the Balkans. A vast amount of metal clothing accessories, jewellery items, weapons, and other types of equipment are known from several thousand graves from the 10th century. Compared to other regions of the Carpathian Basin, the fewest finds were registered in the south, in the territory of today's Republic of Serbia, and more specifically Vojvodina, its northern region. That can be understood in light of sev-

eral facts: there has never been a systematic research programme with the Hungarian Conquest Period in focus in Serbia but respective data mostly come from accidental discoveries and partially published materials. Only a few 10th-century cemeteries have been archaeologically documented in Vojvodina: Bogojevo, Bočar, Jazovo, and Novo Mileševo (Stanojev 1989, 24–29, 32–35, 46–51, 67–67), Rančevo (Uzelac, Radišić 2020), and Batajnica, the only cemetery published in a monograph, which also has a horizon dated to the first half of the 11th century (Špehar, Strugar Bevc 2016). Also, the character of the material available suggests that the settling of Hungarian tribes was not particularly intensive, although it is believed that Vojvodina was included in

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the sphere of influence of conquering Hungarians immediately after their arrival to the Carpathian Basin (cf. Radičević, Špehar 2015). This impression is corroborated by modern, more comprehensive archaeological research conducted in relation to the development of highways and gas pipelines in Vojvodina, as traces of Early Hungarian presence rarely appeared in the sites concerned.

One of the recognisable features of the period is the appearance of luxurious products made of precious metals, used to demonstrate the social position and rank of the elite of that time. In this paper, several exclusive 10th-century finds are presented from northern Bačka (the report was presented in the session entitled *Small Objects Reflecting Great Changes* at the 28th annual EAA Conference in Budapest),

which have remained, due to a series of different circumstances, unknown to the wider scientific public up to this day. By taking into consideration production marks and stylistic traits, an overview is given of the artefacts in focus in the widest possible cultural-geographical milieu, through a prism of interregional connections between the Hungarian homeland in Eastern Europe and the newly occupied territories in eastern Central Europe.

*Site of Mašić Salaš in Stanišić (northern Bačka)*

The site of Mašić Salaš in Stanišić is located ca. 15 km north-east of Sombor (Fig. 1). It has been known since the mid-1980s, when earthworks on the hill of Sveti Ante (Saint Anthony) completely destroyed an

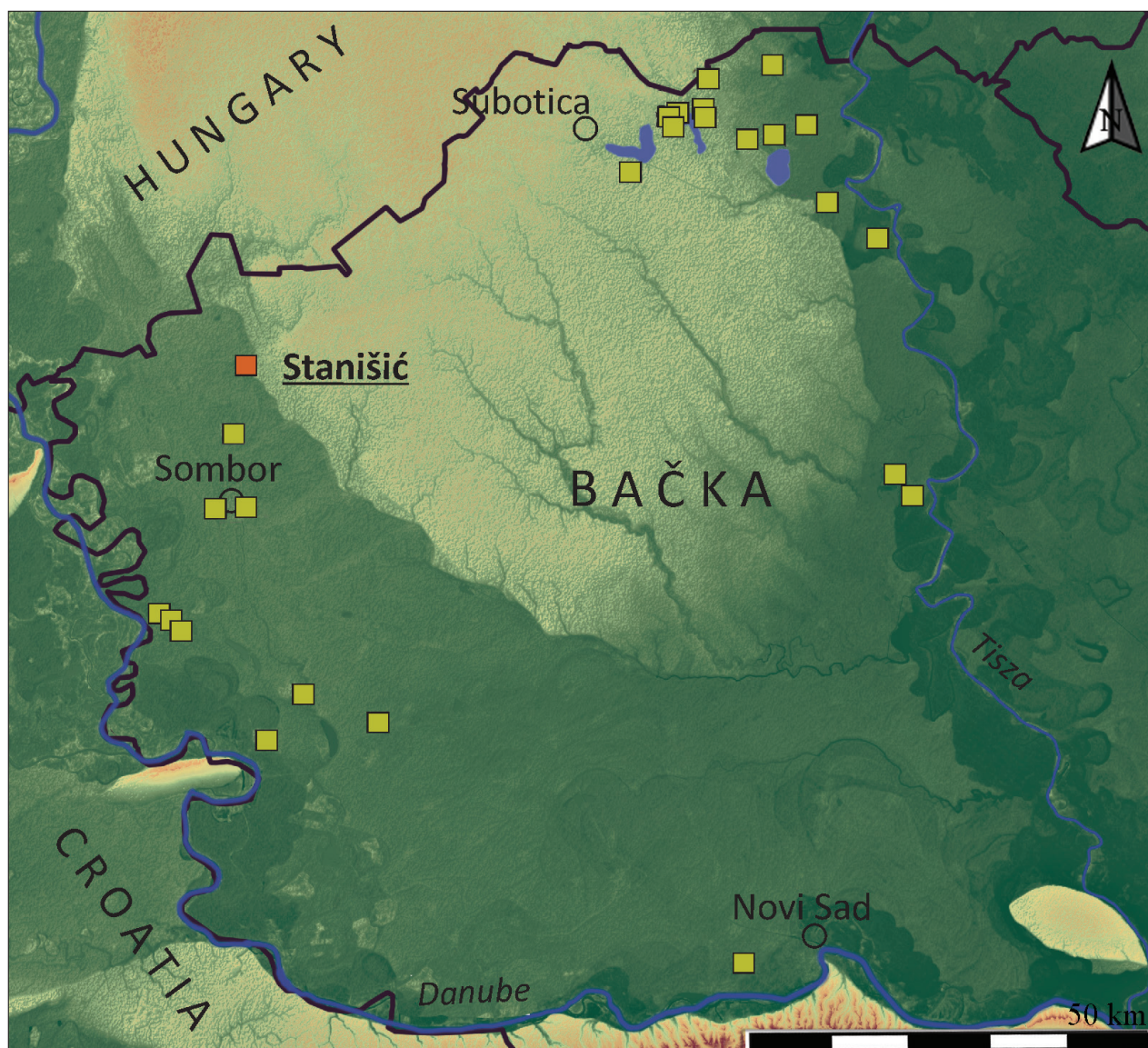


Fig. 1. 10th-century finds in the Bačka region (Radišić, Uzelac 2018, 23, Karta 2; revised)  
 1. kép. 10. századi leletek Bácskából (Radišić, Uzelac 2018, 23, Karta 2; átdolgozott)



early medieval necropolis. According to the owner of the property, a large number of human bones and ceramic fragments were discovered upon removing soil from the mound. The owner removed the 1.50–1.80 m of the top of the mound with machinery to level the terrain, reaching the skeleton level and a layer with burnt, red clay, and then deep-ploughed the surface (Trajković, Trajković 1996, 89, n. 144 and data from the field journal from 1987, Documentation of the City Museum in Sombor, 1–2, 4). Grave finds were mostly destroyed or disappeared; however, the City Museum in Sombor managed to obtain several artefacts. The owner of the land sold a gold ring to the Museum in 1987, and he gifted it a bronze brooch<sup>1</sup> and a heart-shaped bronze pendant.<sup>2</sup> Also, he gave fragments of coarse pottery vessels he had ploughed at the mound to the Museum (Field journal, Documentation of the City Museum in Sombor, 1, 4). The other part of the finds – a gold hoop and three gilded belt appliqué – were purchased in 1988 from a local from another village in the vicinity of Stanišić (Inventory book no. 4, 190–192, and field journal, p. 5, Documentation of the City Museum in Sombor). The second finder declared that he had gathered some more items from a ploughed mound at Mašić Salaš but he lost them since. When it comes to the fourth appliqué (No. 5 in the catalogue), there is no data about it in the documentation; we do not know when and how it arrived to the Museum. Aside from the Late Antique brooch, all other purchased items belong to the Early Hungarian workshop circle.

In order to verify the destruction level of the site, the City Museum in Sombor undertook small-scale excavations in the 1980s. Based on the recovered find material, the museum's curators estimated at the time that the site included a Sarmatian necropolis dug into an Eneolithic tumulus. They intended to verify if the centre of the mound still contained a prehistoric burial and opened five trenches to investigate it.<sup>3</sup> The excavations, however, did not provide any data on grave pits, nor yielded finds which could have possibly originated from graves. In terms of archaeological contexts, scorched, ashy surfaces were mentioned, named 'hearths' in the field documentation, rarely with fragments of animal bones, daub and pottery of undetermined dating (Trajković, Trajković 1996, 89; Radišić, Uzelac 2018, 22, 24). The trenches were deepened to virgin soil at a depth of between 0.40 m and 0.60 m. Thus, the research did not provide any data to specify the character of

the site and its chronological phases; the only thing to be determined based on the purchased finds was that once a 10th-century cemetery was dug into the mound, while the considerably older brooch left open the possibility that the site also had/has a Late Sarmatian horizon.

In the area of Mašić Salaš, several dozen metres away from the local road connecting Stanišić and Svetozar Miletić towards the east, two conspicuous elevations can be discerned under the meadow today with ploughland plots stretching around them. During the occasional surveys of these areas, experts from the City Museum in Sombor did not register any archaeological finds on the surface. Small-scale rescue excavations were performed along the local road (mentioned above) in the territory of the Municipality of Sombor in 2012 within the frame of the construction of a pipeline. The fieldwork yielded details of shallow constructions with no archaeological material, while the highly fragmented ceramic material collected from the surface of the neighbouring fields did not enable a precise dating. At the nearby site of Ekonomija in Stanišić, parts of ovens with late medieval pottery were found (Putica, Uzelac 2018, 5).

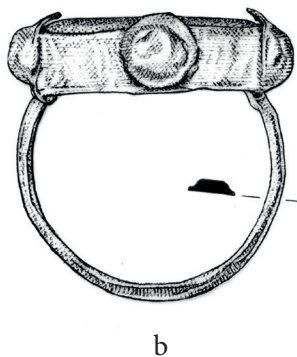
The purchased belt appliqué from Stanišić were the focus of a recent overview in an article published in Serbian (Radišić, Uzelac 2018). The finger-ring and the hoop have been inventoried into the Antique Collection, while the belt mounts were added to the Medieval Jewellery Collection, and because of this, not all the Early Hungarian finds from the site have been published in one place at that time. The finger-ring was presented in a hard-to-find catalogue of the Museum in Sombor as a Roman find from the 2nd–3rd century (Trajković, Trajković 1996, 89, Sl. III). From the moment they arrived to the Museum, the finger-ring and the hoop were kept in a safe as valuable golden finds, and ring appears in a photo from 2003 in the part of the permanent archaeological exhibition dedicated to the Roman Period. The actual cultural and chronological attribution of the ring was determined in the final phase of the preparation of an article on the belt appliqué; thus, a note was added to the manuscript on that due to its exclusivity, the ring will be subjected to a special analysis (Radišić, Uzelac 2018, 22, n. 2). Further research of old documentation has revealed that the hoop belonged to the same context as the belt accessories and the finger-ring.

*Find catalogue*

1. Hoop (Inv. no. 1434). Round hoop made of golden wire, with slightly flattened, open ends. Diameter: 1.7 cm, thickness of the wire: 2 mm, weight: 2.02 g (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Braid ring from Stanišić (photo by V. Uzelac)  
2. kép. Hajkarika Stanišić lelőhelyről (fotó: V. Uzelac)



2. Ring (Inv. no. 1432). Finger-ring made of a gold sheet, with an oval case in its bezel for a decorative inlay: a carnelian gem<sup>4</sup> bearing the simplified representation of a quadruped animal depicted in short and shallow engraved lines. Four hemispherical knobs are welded to the bezel in a symmetrical, cross-shaped pattern; their upper parts, in the shape of short leaves, bend over the rim and secure the inlaid engraved gem in place. Two small leaves were preserved entirely, one has a damaged top, while the fourth is completely missing. The band of the ring is massive and wide, flat on the inner side and slightly profiled on the outside, with no decorations. The total height of the ring is 2.7 cm; the dimensions of the head, with the knobs, are 2.7 × 2.3 cm, dimensions of the engraved gem are 2 × 1.7 cm, the height of the bezel is 0.6 cm. The outer diameter of the band is 2.5 cm, inner 2.3 cm, and the width of the band is 0.4 cm. The weight of the ring is 10.91 g (Fig. 3, Fig. 7).
3. Appliqué (Inv. no. 1435). Heart-shaped mount with five symmetrically distributed knobs around



Fig. 3. Finger-ring from Stanišić (photo by V. Uzelac, drawing by S. Marković)  
3. kép. Gyűrű Stanišić lelőhelyről (fotó: V. Uzelac, rajz: S. Marković)

the edge, a seven-leaf palmette motif on the front and three rivets for fastening on the backside. Cast silver, gilded, measuring  $2.6 \times 1.9$  cm. Corrosive products typical of bronze are visible on the front side where the gilding wore out, indicating that the object was made of a relatively low-quality silver alloy (Fig. 4. 1).

4. Appliqué (Inv. no. 1436). This mount is almost identical to the previous one: it is heart-shaped, with five symmetrically distributed knobs around the edge, a seven-leaf palmette motif on the front and three rivets for fastening on the backside. Cast silver, gilded, measuring of  $2.6 \times 1.9$  cm; it was reassembled from two fragments (Fig. 4. 2).
5. Appliqué (Inv. no. 1437a). Heart-shaped mount with six symmetrically distributed knobs around the edge and a seven-leaf palmette motif on the front. Two of the three rivets have been preserved on the backside, one of them also has a flat washer for firmer fastening. The third rivet is damaged, only the base is visible. Seemingly, another rivet was also made by mistake, but only its contours are visible now. Cast silver, gilded, measuring  $2.6 \times 1.9$  cm. It bears a greenish hue on the front side, and visible traces of bronze corrosion on the back, around the rivets (Fig. 4. 3).<sup>5</sup>
6. Appliqué (Inv. no. 1437b). Fragment of an oval or leaf-shaped mount with three symmetrically distributed, round knobs along the edge, three somewhat smaller knobs in the form of a grape cluster on the damaged part, and a round hole at the centre. The decoration on the front side (a multiple-leaf palmette motif) is very similar to

that of the other examples. Two rivets have been preserved on the back. Cast silver, gilded; fragment length 2.5 cm, width 2 cm. It was reassembled from two fragments (Fig. 4. 4).

*The ring from Stanišić and four-knobbed finger-rings in the Carpathian Basin and Eastern Europe*

The ring from Stanišić belongs to the group of rings with a bezel, which was a favourite hand jewellery from the 9th up to the 10th century in the eastern parts of the European continent. The basic typological characteristic of these rings is four ball/button-shaped knobs or prongs on the bezel, arranged in a cross, added for decoration and for holding the decorative glass or semi-precious stone inlays in place.<sup>6</sup> Even though these rings are rather uniform in terms of both their morphological and stylistic aspects, there are certain details regarding their production technique, the size of the bezel, and the choice of inlay which enable one to distinguish between regional variants and discuss workshop origins. In overviews of eastern, Early Hungarian prototypes, such finds are listed as one of the characteristic elements the Hungarian tribes brought along from their early homeland to the Carpathian Basin (Türk 2012a, 11–12, Abb. 3. 1; Tyurk 2018, 424–425, Ris. 1. 7).

Because of their high prevalence in the Pontic steppe between the Dnieper and the Don rivers, the area of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture (Fig. 5. 9) (Pletneva 1981, 74–75, Ris. 37. 6), bezelled finger-rings are often referred to as ‘Saltovo type’ (Horváth 2005; Mesterházy 2013, 484; Chernyshenko 2015); how-



Fig. 4. Belt appliques from Stanišić (photo by V. Uzelac)  
4. kép. Övveretek Stanišić lelőhelyről (fotó: V. Uzelac)

ever, they were actually widespread in different areas of Eastern Europe. There are numerous examples known from the north, i.e., areas around the middle course of the Volga and the Kama rivers (Halikova 1976, 59–63, 4. kép 9; 5. kép 26; 7. kép 13; 8. kép 29; Stashenkov 2020, 28, Obr. 21; 39, Obr. 48; 40, Obr. 49–50; 62, Obr. 124; 76, Obr. 158), where one of the early homelands (*Magna Hungaria*) of the Hungarians was located (cf. Halikova 1976, 77, 15. kép; Türk 2012b, 2, Fig. 1; Révész 2014, 21, Fig. 11; Komar 2018, 424, Ris. 108), as well as the neighbouring homeland of the Volga Bulgarians (Rudenko 2015, 163, 236, 239–240, Ris. 34. 1–3, Ris. 37. 1–2, 4–5, Ris. 38. 1, 3–7) (Fig. 5. 7, 10, 12). Furthermore, several examples are known from the southern Ural, i.e., Chelyabinsk around Lake Uelgi (Grudochko, Botalov 2013, 135, Ris. 26). It must be especially pointed out that similar pieces have been found in the area of *Etelköz*, between the Dnieper and Southern Bug rivers, the dwelling area of early Hungarians directly before they moved to the Carpathian Basin. The related archaeological record is referred to as the so-called Subotcy horizon (named after the settlement Subotcy / Суботці in the region of Kirovohrad Oblast, Ukraine), dated to between 840 and 895 and bearing the characteristic elements of the Early Hungarian culture (Komar 2011, 56–68; Türk 2012a, 14–17, Abb. 5). Finger-rings from this region have small button-shaped additions for keeping the undecorated inlay (mostly in glass in diverse colours) in place (Fig. 11. 2) (Bokiy, Pletneva 1988, 101, Ris. 2. 2; Komar 2018, 327, Ris. 12. 15). Some examples have semi-precious stone (carnelian) inlays, such as the ring from Verkhniy Saltiv (Верхній Салтів) in eastern Ukraine (Fig. 5. 14) (Komar 2009, 121) and more (see below). Based on Alan cemeteries, this ring type was in fashion in the northern Caucasus between the Black and the Caspian Sea from the 9th up to the beginning of the 11th century (Fig. 5. 11). Examples of this type documented there are somewhat different; they have a diamond-shaped, round, or oval bezel, with four large knobs/prongs distributed in the form of a cross; the bezel for the decorative stone extends to the entire ring head or represents a smaller recess at its centre (Vinogradov 1983, 219, Abb. 5. 1–3, 12–13; Chizhova, Kadieva 2016, 289, Cat. Nos. 201–202). Several rings with decorative inlays have also been found in the area between the Prut and Dniester rivers in Moldavia and north-eastern Romania (Ryabtseva, Rabinovich 2014, 266, Ris. 4. 13, 14; 276).

The production of such rings continued in the Carpathian Basin with several technological and stylistic innovations. According to the classification by Ciprián Horváth twenty years ago, ca. fifty specimens were known from the Carpathian Basin at that time. The author divided the material into two groups based on production technique, which, in this case, also determined the differences in the overall appearance of the rings. The first group comprises cast-in-one pieces made of silver and, very rarely, bronze, with a shallow bezel and four small 'prongs' arranged in a cross, which resemble Eastern European variants (Fig. 5. 4) (Horváth 2005, 122, n. 8, 1. kép 5; 3. kép 1; 4. kép 1, 2, 4). The second group, with many more examples, consists of larger finger-rings of a more luxurious appearance, made sometimes of gold. They have a composite character, i.e., they were made of a metal sheet, by welding a deep bezel onto the band, with large hemispherical decorations and pronounced prongs for the inlay (Fig. 5. 1–3). The decorative stone is most commonly in line with the top of the bezel, while concave pieces are rare (Horváth 2005, 122–123, n. 9, 1. kép 1–3, 4, 6; 2. kép 1–5; 3. kép 2–4; 4. kép 3, 5), and only a few finds have engravings on the bezel and the band (Fig. 5. 2). Viewed as a whole, these rings seem to be imitations of the luxurious (Byzantine) finger-rings with a bezel bordered by granules, like the ones found in Early Hungarian necropoles in Szabolcs (Fig. 5. 5) and Tarpa in today's north-eastern Hungary (Mesterházy 1991, 158–159, 8. ábra; Mesterházy, Fodor 1996a, 171, Fig. 1; Mesterházy 2013, 484, 487, Abb. 4–5),<sup>7</sup> with the large hemispherical knobs imitating the granules. Sophisticated goldsmith techniques like filigree and granulation were not widely used in the Carpathian Basin in the 10th century; to obtain a similar visual effect on the rings, the appearance of granules was imitated using the pressblech technique (cf. Bollók 2012, 232, 239). Granules were imitated the same way on some examples from Alania in the northern Caucasus (Fig. 5. 11), the bezels of which were made smaller so that the knob-shaped additions would become more prominent (Chizhova, Kadieva 2016, 288–289, Cat. Nos. 200–201). It is not quite clear when and where these imitations of Byzantine finger-rings emerged first, in Eastern Europe or in the Hungarian Plain because the specimens in the two distant regions are very similar and for the time being, their precise dating is not possible.

Bezelled finger-rings appear mostly in relatively intensive settlement areas of the Hungarian con-



Fig. 5. Four-knobbed finger-rings from the Carpathian Basin and Eastern Europe

5. kép. Négygombos gyűrűk a Kárpát-medence és Kelet-Európa területéről

- 1: Szeged-Kiskundorozsma, Hungary (Lőrinczy, Türk 2011, 469, 19. kép 2); 2: Pusztadobos, Hungary (Révész 2014, 19, Fig. 8); 3: Kenézlő, Hungary (Révész 2014, 65, Fig. 55); 4: Sereď, Slovakia (Bollók 2015a, 93, Fig. 7. 1b, 1c); 5: Szabolcs Region, Hungary (Mesterházy 2013, 487, Abb. 5); 6: Krylos, Ukraine (Komar 2018, 396, Ris. 80. 13); 7: Proszvet, Samara Region, Russia (Stashenkov 2020, 76, Ris. 158); 8: Lugovskoe, Saratov Region, Russia (Galkin 1983, 382, Abb. 3. 8); 9: Voronezh Region, Russia ([http://donovedenie.ru/blog/khazarskie\\_perstni\\_s\\_izobrazhenija-mi/2014-11-21-502](http://donovedenie.ru/blog/khazarskie_perstni_s_izobrazhenija-mi/2014-11-21-502)); 10: Nemchanka, Russia (Stashenkov 2020, 28, Ris. 21); 11: Alania, Northern Caucasus, Russia (Chizhova, Kadieva 2016, 289, Cat. 201); 12: Yaroslav Region, Russia (Murasheva 2012, 112, Kat. 298); 13: Birka, Sweden (Wärmländer et al. 2015, 132, Fig. 1); 14: Verkhni Saltiv, Ukraine (Komar 2009, 121)

querors: the Upper and Middle Tisza Region, the Körös Valley, and the Maros confluence area, i.e., the wider surroundings of Szeged. Several interesting examples come from areas more in the north, Transdanubia and parts of the Danube Valley along the Hungarian-Slovakian border (Horváth 2005, 131, map 1). The examples available thus far also show that silver rings were more common than gold in cemeteries in the Carpathian Basin. Besides, luxurious golden rings have been found in relatively richly equipped graves of both sexes, albeit some believe that they are more common in graves of women, while completely missing from children's burials (Révész 1996b, 82; Horváth 2005, 125–129, 148). Still, most of the most luxurious pieces are linked with the graves of the Hungarian military elite, indicating that they also had a certain symbolic-status function, along a decorative one.<sup>8</sup>

The ring from Stanišić belongs to the second group by Horváth and has several very close analogies in the Carpathian region. The most similar is the gold ring with a green glass inlay from the famous Grave 52, a warrior's burial, of Karos-Eperjesszög Cemetery II (Fig. 6. 2). It was discovered on the right hand of the warrior buried with a lavish furnishing and insignia of elite – belt, weapons and horse harness. The dimensions of this ring also correspond well to the one from Stanišić (Révész 1996a, 26, 78. tábla 2; Révész 1996b, 82). Four finger-rings of this type were found in the Karos II cemetery, two in graves of males and two in burials of women.<sup>9</sup> Similar rings with a deep bezel and large prongs have also been found in Biharkeresztes-Bethlen Gábor Street, Mezőtúr-Dohányosgerinc, Piliny-Leshegy, Szakáld-Mulatódomb, Tiszabezdéd, Szakony-Tsz kavicsbánya (Horváth 2005, 1. kép 1–2, 6; 2. kép 4; 3. kép 2; 4. kép. 3, 5), Győr-Téglavető, and Győr-Újszállások (Horváth 2014, 46–47, 56–57, 10. tábla 21; 15. tábla 4). Several golden examples are known from the vicinity of Szeged, which represent the southernmost zone of occurrence of these rings: such jewellery is known from the archaeologically documented cemetery of Szeged-Kiskundorozsma (Fig. 5. 1) and the destroyed cemetery of Négyhalomdűlő at the Serbian-Hungarian border (Mesterházy 1996b, 353, Fig. 1; Lőrinczy, Türk 2011, 423, 435, 19. kép 1–3).

The ring from Stanišić is massive, with band of ca. 2.5 cm in diameter, suggesting that it belonged to a man. The diameter of the band of the ring from Karos II, Grave 52, is 2.5 cm, while its bezel measures 2.2 × 2.5 cm,<sup>10</sup> similar to the dimensions of our

find. Besides, a ring from Sereď in Slovakia can be mentioned, which also probably belonged to a man buried there (Bollók 2015a, 96); the diameter of the head of the ring is ca. 3 cm, and the dimensions of the gemma are 2.3 × 1.7 cm. The diameter of the band is unknown.<sup>11</sup> It would seem that pieces from graves of females were somewhat smaller, i.e., that their bezel was not quite as massive.<sup>12</sup> Our ring could have been in use for a relatively long period, as its knob-shaped additions are deformed, the engraved gem holders and the base of the bezel damaged, and the surface of the gem scratched and cracked; however, one should not exclude the possibility that it became damaged during the ploughing of the field or as a result of some other mechanical impact, perhaps in the hands of the person who discovered it.

The dating of bezelled rings was determined by Western European and Arabian coins from the end of the 9th and the first half of the 10th centuries in related grave assemblages in cemeteries in Hungary and Slovakia. Based on that, the heyday of the type was in the first two thirds of the 10th century. For example, Karos-Eperjesszög II, Grave 52 was dated to the early 10th century by two Arabian silver *dirhams* minted in 904/905 (put into the mouth of the deceased as *obols*), while ten perforated coins of the Frankish King Louis (899–911) were reused as decorations on the hem of his kaftan (Révész 1996a, 26–27; Révész 1996b, 98, Fig. 26). Some examples could be in use in the late 10th century but not the 11th, as no finger-rings have yet been found in Árpád Age cemeteries with coins of the Hungarian kings (coined specimens are listed in detail in Horváth 2005, 129–131, with further references).

The scatter of the relatively numerous finds of sheet rings with a deep bezel and prominent knobs (prongs) suggest that the workshop that produced them operated in the Carpathian Basin. However, three examples, very similar to our find from Stanišić, come from kurgan burials in Ukraine and Russia, sites distant from one another and linked to the Hungarian early homelands. A gold ring was reported from the warrior grave at Krylos (Крылос), near Halych, in western Ukraine. This piece has an oval bezel and large prongs for the red carnelian inlay (Fig. 5. 6). The related grave was dated to the 9th century and interpreted as a relic of the migration of Hungarians towards the West through some gorges of the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine (Fihol 1997, 33, 108–110, ring no. 1 on p. 110). However, several other publications suggest a later dating, to

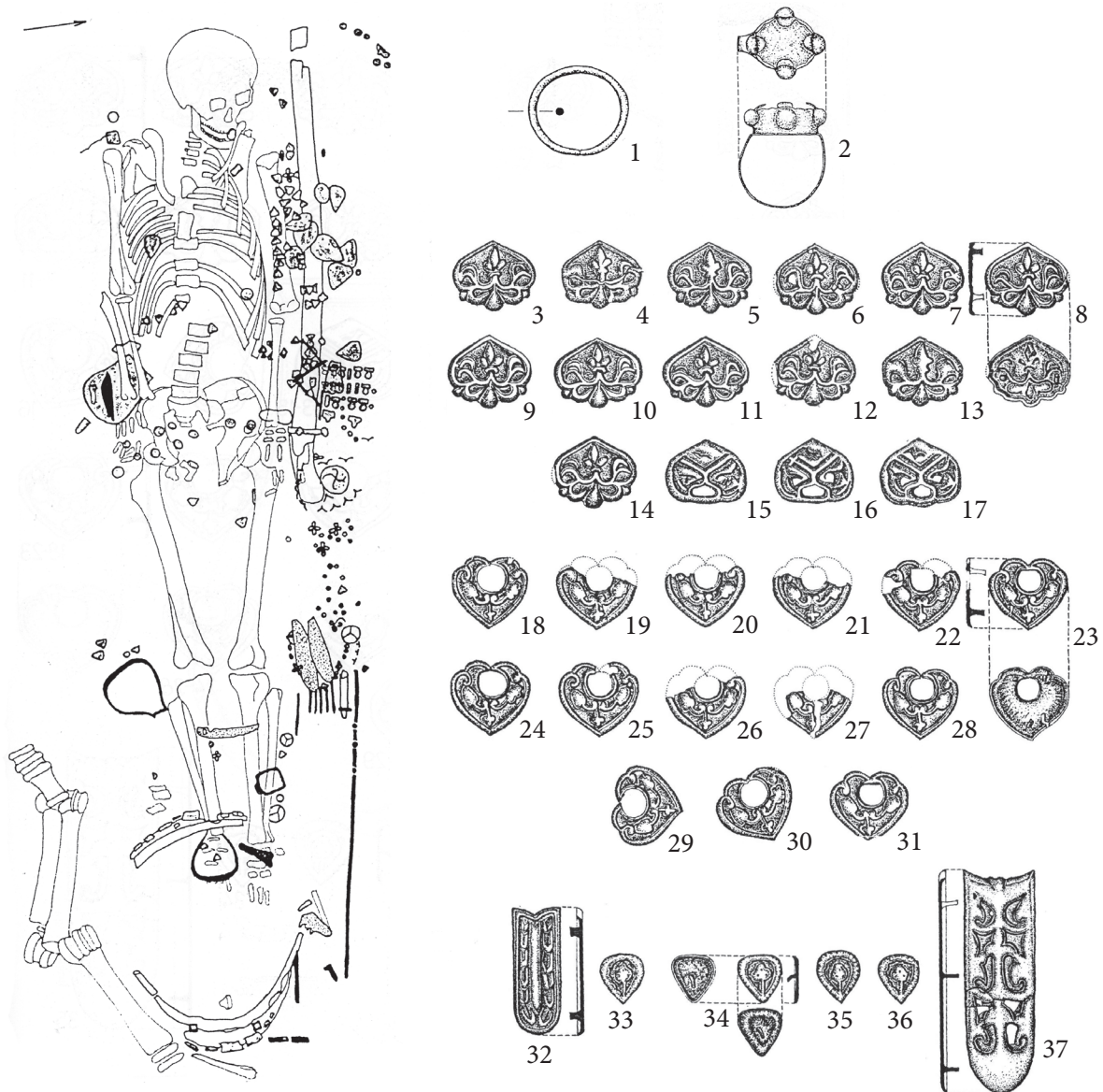


Fig. 6. Part of the assemblage of Karos-Eperjesszög II, Grave 52, a warrior's burial (Révész 1996a, 301–302, 78–79. tábla; Révész 2006b, 427, 3. ábra)

6. kép. Síregyüttes részlete. Karos-Eperjesszög II. temető 52. sír, egy harcos nyughelye (Révész 1996a, 301–302, 78–79. tábla; Révész 2006b, 427, 3. ábra)

the first half or even third quarter of the 10th century (Fodor 1996b, 437–438; Pletneva 2003, 114; Révész 2014, 16–17, Fig. 4; Komar 2018, 212, 214–215, Ris. 80. 13).<sup>13</sup> According to the authors of these, the man in the respective grave was either a member of the Hungarian border army, established after the Hungarians had settled in the Carpathian Basin, or a reputable warrior from a Hungarian tribe from the valleys of the Volga or the Oka, recruited during the territorial-administrative organisation of the Principality of Kievan Rus' (Révész 2014, 16–17, Fig. 4; Komar 2018, 212, 214–215). The second ring comes from Grave 7, of a female, in a kurgan at Prosvet

(Samara Region) in Russia, a burial with a very interesting grave assemblage dated to the 9th century (Stashenkov 2020, 69–78). The original publication describes the deceased as a woman between 35 and 40 (Bagautdinov et al. 2006, 400). This woman was buried with a ceramic vessel, a knife, and tinder with a flint, some animal meat offering, as well as a pair of Saltovo-type gold earrings, a gold ring, and a bronze belt.<sup>14</sup> The finger-ring, of which only the head with an orange-red carnelian inlay in a bezel has been preserved, was discovered between the thighbones, close to the knees. Based on the overall appearance of the bezel, this example is the closest analogy to

our find from Stanišić (Fig. 5. 7) (Bagautdinov et al. 2006, 401, Ris. 3. 13; Stashenkov 2020, 76).<sup>15</sup>

Another similar analogy from Lugovskoe (Saratov Oblast) in the Middle Volga Region in Russia must also be mentioned here. The grave dug into a mound and dated to the 9th century, contained the remains of a person buried with a rich find assemblage comprising a belt set and jewellery (bracelets and rings), as well as several personal items (a knife and a spindle whorl). A silver ring with an undecorated carnelian gem was discovered in the hand (Fig. 5. 8). This grave was also connected with the Hungarian tribes settled in the Volga Valley. However, the gender of the deceased remains unknown (Galkin 1983, 379–382, Abb. 1. 1, Abb. 3. 8).

#### *The unusual engraved gem of the ring from Stanišić*

The engraved gem of the ring from Stanišić is a special item which had a history of its own before it was reused as a decorative inlay. It is not a classical Antique *intaglio*; also, it lacks direct analogies, and the representation of the animal was made in an unusual style, making its interpretation and the reconstruction of its origin quite a challenge.

To perform a detailed assessment, the gem was removed from the bezel and subjected to non-destructive gemmological analyses. The stone is approximately oval, of an orange-red hue, and measures 2 × 1.7 cm (Fig. 7. a, b). It was faceted and polished into an almost flat cabochon with a slightly convex upper surface. Its bottom is also polished but not to a high gloss. Through the application of several gemmological analytic methods (density/weight and refractive index measurements and polariscopic examination) the gem was identified as carnelian, a natural chalcedony variant.<sup>16</sup> The craftsman who made the gem did not apply the standard *intaglio* engraving technique but engraved the image only to the surface; this means that the engraved gem was not intended to be used as a stamp. The uniform (ca. 0.5 mm) width of the lines indicates that only a single tool was used in the process (Fig. 7. c). The image on the gem is very well-centered and detailed. The engraved lines are symmetrical, although they do go over the line of the basic field at two points. The animal is represented in motion, facing right, with a bent head, open jaws, and a mane sketched in a double line. At a specific angle, an eye can be discerned and two short engraved lines on the upper part of the head, marking perhaps ears. Its long, up-

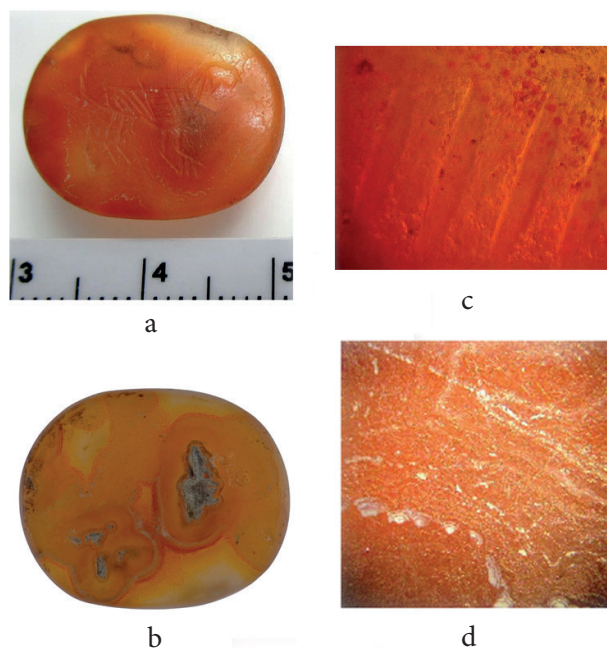


Fig. 7. Gem of the ring from Stanišić, photos made during the gemmological analysis (Z. Miladinović)  
7. kép. A Stanišić lelőhelyről származó gyűrű ékköve a gemmológiai elemzés során készült fotókon (fotók: Z. Miladinović)

right, bent tail ends in a stylised tuft (marked by an X). The body of the animal is covered by fields with alternating hatching. It has prominent claws, each marked by three parallel engraved lines (Fig. 3. a, c). All these traits suggest that the stylised representation depicts a lion.

In early medieval European context, reusing Antique engraved gems was typical mostly of the Merovingian and Carolingian cultural spheres and, somewhat later, during the so-called Ottonian renaissance. Aside from jewellery, precious and semi-precious stones in the West were used largely for decorating relics and ecclesiastical artefacts (Ament 1991; Bollók 2015a, 98–100 with further references; Beghelli 2017).<sup>17</sup> Antique glyptic artefacts were reused, to a measure, in the crafts-artistic circle of the Principdom of Great Moravia, which was under the strong political and cultural influence of the Carolingian Empire (Kouřil 2014, Cat. Nos. 179, 401; Bollók 2015a, 100, 110, Fig. 9). In contrast, this practice was rare in the territories of the Byzantine Empire (Bollók 2015a, 100; Albani 2015) and the Avar Khaganate (Gesztelyi 2010). Decorating jewellery with engraved gems and cameos was not particularly characteristic of the material culture of Early Hungarians either. As mentioned, the bezels of rings were decorated mostly



with glass inlays in different colours, and only seven finger-rings with a semi-precious or precious stone inlay are known so far.<sup>18</sup> One of these, an often-mentioned piece, is a silver ring with a jasper gem, a grave find from the cemetery of Sereď I (Szered-Mácsédi dombok) in today's south-western Slovakia. Even though they belong to the same type, this example differs from the one from Stanišić in the shape of the head (its head/bezel was cast in one piece with the band). According to the systematisation, the ring belongs to the first group (Horváth 2005, 122, n. 8). The gem bears a bust of the Roman Empress Faustina (*Fig. 5. 4*) (Točík 1968, 48, Taf. XXXVIII. 7, 19, LV. 17; Gesztelyi 2003, 65–66; Horváth 2005, 137, 4. kép 2; Daňova 2008, 125, Obr. 1; Bollók 2015a, 96, Fig. 7. 1). Another example of the use of Roman gems comes from the Gádoros cemetery in south-eastern Hungary. The silver ring found in Grave 2 has a gem made of unknown material, bearing the representation of the Goddess Concordia. The find went missing since its discovery and only archive photos have remained of the gem (Bálint 1991, 41, Abb. 13; Bollók 2015a, 94, Fig. 7. 2). Other finds – all made of gold, incidentally – have undecorated inlays made of ruby (three, one from Karos, Bollók 2015a, 97, n. 89–91) or carnelian. Rings with carnelian gem inlays are of special interest to us. According to the records available, a gold ring with an engraved carnelian gem was found in the Early Hungarian cemetery of Eger-Szép-asszonyvölgy and another one in the cemetery of Szeged-Bojárhalom. The find from Eger has been lost (Reizner 1891, 107–108, Pl. III. 1–2; Hampel 1905, II, 501–502; Bollók 2015a, 97, n. 92).

There are several hypotheses on the origin of the engraved gems reused in Early Hungarian artifacts in the Carpathian Basin. According to one, antique gems were a part of the booty of the Hungarian campaigns in the west (Horváth 2005, 124; Bollók 2015a, 96–102, 107–108); the Hungarians probably melted the items they obtained to use the metal for making objects according to their own taste, while only rarely re-using semi-precious and precious stones in composite jewellery pieces. The actual representations depicted on the gems, such as the Roman empress or the goddess, most probably had no special value for them, because they were foreign and did not match their aesthetic standards (cf. Bollók 2015a, 78, n. 6). However, the lion motif on our gem fits the Early Hungarian iconography. Even though representations of quadruped animals were not present in large numbers, as was the case, for exam-

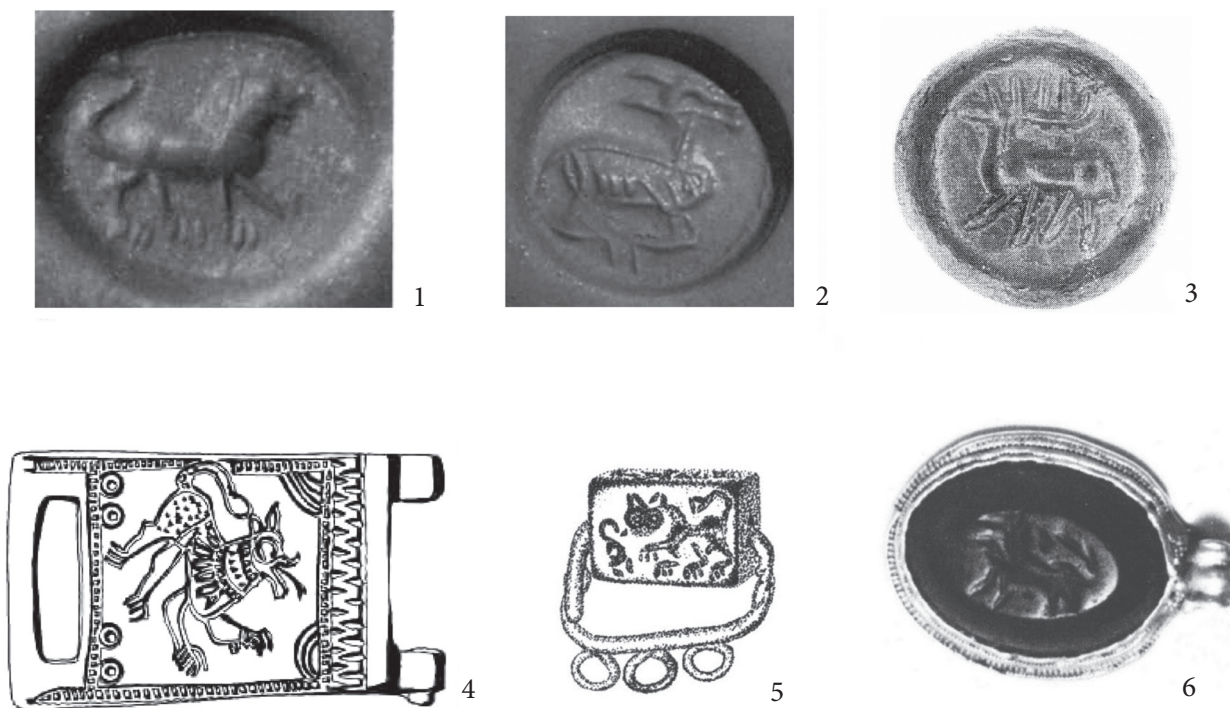
ple, in the Late Avar milieu, motifs of deer, cattle, lions, and gryphons appear on 10th-century belt and headgear accessories in the Carpathian Basin, either local products or imports from Byzantium or Western Europe (Bollók 2015b, 344–352, 106–109. kép). In this light, a question remains open: Could the lion figure on the gem of the ring from Stanišić add to the exclusivity of the jewellery? As it was noted above, ruby and carnelian inlays were used solely for decorating finger-rings made of gold (Nagy 1968, 82; Bollók 2015a, 97; an observation also corroborated by the find in focus), which indicates a standardisation of the choice of decorative inlays for the most luxurious rings.

Another possibility, which cannot be excluded in the discussion on the provenance of engraved gems in Early Hungarian rings, is that they had local origins. Hungarians could have obtained those decorative stones from ruins of Roman cities, as numerous examples of gems from the Roman Imperial Period are known in Pannonia (e.g., a number from Szöny-Brigetio; see Gesztelyi 2001). Thomas Gesztelyi expressed an opinion that the findspot of the gem from Sereď was actually in Slovakia, because Marcus Aurelius, whose spouse was the Empress Faustina, used to sojourn in these regions during the Marcomannic Wars. He even believes that the owner of the gem was either the emperor himself or a reputable person in his entourage, considering the high-quality of the production, indicating a craftsman or someone working at the court (Gesztelyi 2011, 257). The third hypothesis on the arrival of semi-precious stones (mainly carnelian) in the Carpathian Basin links the finds with the Near East and Western Asia. Muslim merchants are mentioned as middlemen in gem trade, who would assumedly travel even as far as the Carpathian Basin in their long journeys (Nagy 1968, 82; Horváth 2005, 124).

The characteristics of the engraved gem of the ring in focus accord best with the third option. As mentioned above, it is not a classical piece of Roman glyptic,<sup>19</sup> but, as our search for analogies has revealed, certain details of the animal representation have the best similarity in the Sasanian glyptic record. The craft of engraving semi-precious stones in the Near East is known to have reached its peak during the Sasanian Empire (ca. AD 224–651). A large number of stamps with perforations for suspension originate from this period, while a smaller percentage of the engraved stone finds (about a third, according to some statistic data) are cabochons – ring inlays

(Bivar 1969, 20–23; Gorelick, Gwinnett 1996, 79; Ritter 2017, 279). Representations on stamps and gems have been divided into several categories based on the quality of the engraving ranging from very realistic, detailed ones (especially human portraits) to the depictions simplified to the extreme and made with shallow, linear carving (cf. Brunner 1978, 131–134; Ritter 2017, 283), similar to our find. Aside from human figures and birds, especially popular motifs in Sasanian art were also lion, horse, deer, antelope, bull, and ram representations (cf. Bivar 1969; Brunner 1978) (*Fig. 5. 9, Fig. 8. 1–3, 5–6*). The motif of the lion occupied a special place in the artistic expression of various cultures in the Near and Middle East already since the first millennium BC. Aside from the glyptic material, lions were often depicted on textiles and metal vessels. This motif spread from the Sasanian-Abbasid cultural circle to Byzantium and Western Europe (Feltham 2010, 34–41). As for

the gem in focus, the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York holds a Sasanian stamp with a representation very similar to ours: a left-facing lion figure with its tail raised high, open jaws, and oversized claws depicted the same way like on the find from Stanišić. There is a difference, though: the body of the lion was made in negative, in order to make an impression when used as a stamp (Brunner 1978, 96, Cat. 183, 132, style B)<sup>20</sup> (*Fig. 8. 1*). Based on the shallow engraving and hatching on the body, the depiction of an antelope on another stamp in the same collection counts as another close analogy (*Fig. 8. 2*) (Brunner 1978, 101, Cat. 10, 133, style C). Several lion representations with almost identically depicted claws, lying down or walking, can be found on Sasanian stamps from the 5th–7th centuries in the collections of the British Museum in London (Bivar 1969, 69–70, 72, Pl. 9/DA. 7–13, 10/DE. 1–6; [www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/](http://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/), mus. nos.



*Fig. 8. Quadruped representations. 1: Late Sasanian stamp seal (impression), Metropolitan Museum of Art (Brunner 1978, 96, Cat. 183); 2: late Sasanian stamp seal (impression), Metropolitan Museum of Art (Brunner 1978, 101, Cat. 10); 3: late Sasanian gemstone, 4th–5th centuries, Hungarian National Museum (Gesztelyi 2000, 166, Cat. 289); 4: bronze belt buckle, Asia Minor, 10th century, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (Schulze-Dörrlamm 2009, 259, Abb. 97, 11); 5: haematite seal with gold fitting, Iran, 10–11th centuries, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Jenkins, Keene 1983, 21, Fig. 1); 6: pendant set with a Sasanian gem, 7th century, Silbertswold, England (Arrhenius 1971, 42, Fig. 40) 8. kép. Négylábú állatok ábrázolásai. 1: kései saszanida pecsétlő lenyomata, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Brunner 1978, 96, Cat. 183); 2: kései saszanida pecsétlő lenyomata, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Brunner 1978, 101, Cat. 10); 3: kései saszanida ékkő, 4–5. század, Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (Gesztelyi 2000, 166, Cat. 289); 4: bronz övcsat, Kisázsia, 10. század, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (Schulze-Dörrlamm 2009, 259, Abb. 97, 11); 5: hematit pecsétlő arany függesztővel, irán, 10–11. század, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Jenkins, Keene 1983, 21, Fig. 1); 6: csüngőkészlet saszanida ékkővel, 7. század, Silbertswold, England (Arrhenius 1971, 42, Fig. 40)*

119760, 119769, 120313, 120315, 12037). Another lion representation on a younger stamp, dated to the 10th–11th century, kept at the Metropolitan Museum, must also be mentioned (Jenkins, Keene 1983, 19, Cat. 3f, 21, Fig. 1). This find most probably originates from Nishapur in Iran; it features a representation with identical depiction of the claws and similarities in the tail tuft, which is triangular in this case (Fig. 8. 5). The lion motif was particularly popular on Byzantine buckle plates in the 9th and 10th centuries; on these, the head of the animal was most commonly depicted *en face*. There are, however, some examples with the figure depicted in profile, with open jaws, a raised tail, decorated body, and oversized claws, in a manner similar to those on gems (Fig. 8. 4) (Schulze-Dörrlamm 2009, 254–262. Type G3, especially examples with linear representations of quadrupeds, Cat. 573–574, Abb. 95, Abb. 97. 11–13). A certain iconographic similar-

ity can also be observed with representations of raging lions on Late Carolingian buckles from the 9th century in Western Europe; the body of the animal is hatched, its tail lifted, the jaws open and accentuated (Schulze-Dörrlamm 2007, 147–148, Abb. 1–2; Bollók 2015b, 491, 172. kép).

A similar representation can be seen on an unusual belt strap-end from a 9th-century Great Moravian cemetery in Mikulčice-Valy, Czech Republic (Poulik 1975, 82, Tab. 48. 3; Prohászka 2005, 145–146; Kouřil 2014, 378, Cat. 176; Klanica et al. 2019, 59, 227, Abb. 66. 2; Ungerman 2020, 318, 320, Fig. 214. 10). This item has three inlays in different shapes and dimensions, while the central, largest inlay is a spherical cabochon with the engraved representation of a quadruped animal with hatched body (Fig. 9). The figure faces right (like the animal on the ring from Stanišić) but standing. It is assumed to depict a horse (Poulik 1975, 82). By comparing the available

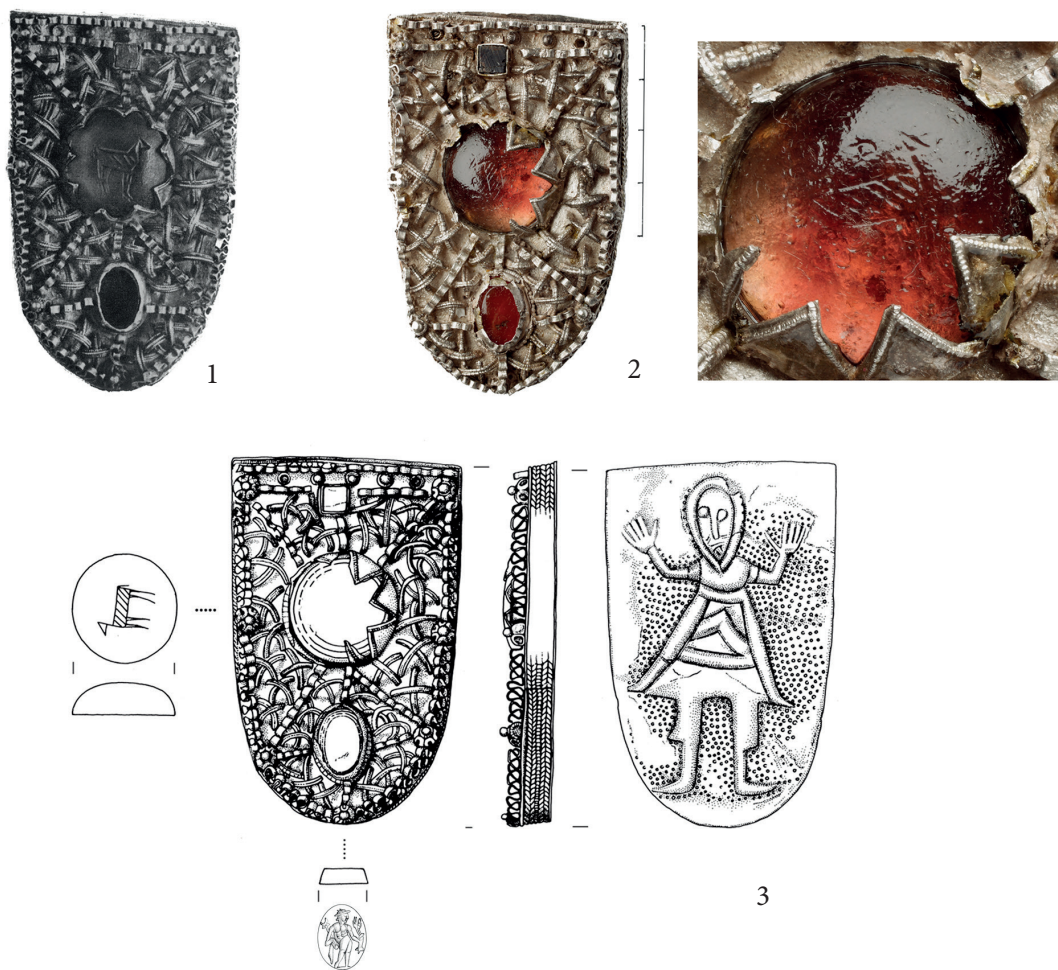


Fig. 9. Great Moravian strap-end. 9th century, Mikulčice, Grave 390 (1: Prohászka 2005, 145; 2: Ungerman 2020, 318, Fig. 214. 10; 3: Klanica et al. 2019, 227, Abb. 66. 2)

9. kép. Morva szíjvég. 9. század, Mikulčice, 390. sír (1: Prohászka 2005, 145; 2: Ungerman 2020, 318, Fig. 214. 10; 3: Klanica et al. 2019, 227, Abb. 66. 2)

illustrations, we gained the impression that the central inlay of the strap-end in *Fig. 9. 1* differs from the one in *Fig. 9. 2–3*. Namely, on the first image, which depicts the item right after discovery,<sup>21</sup> nine whole small leaves (the prongs) are visible on the edges of the inlay, while on later, modern illustrations, five of the small leaves are missing. This suggests that the strap-end was damaged when the stone was removed from the bezel. The inlay on the older photo is made of a non-transparent material, which is violet under a certain light (Poulik 1975, 82), and not of the transparent, shiny, pink glass which appears on the other. Also, the engraved lines on the older photo are somewhat deeper, the neck of the animal is accentuated (like on the representation from Stanišić), the body is wide, and there are widenings in the feet area (hooves?) on the front legs. The other photo and the drawing show a shallowly engraved quadruped, with a neck depicted with just one line, narrow body, no marks of feet on the legs, and a short tail.

The top of the strap end from Mikulčice is decorated with a small oval Roman carnelian gem with a Mercury representation; however, the image is not visible because it is turned towards the inner part of the setting. The strap-side end of the mount is adorned with a small square inlay of unidentified dark substance (*Fig. 9. 3*). The space between the inlays is densely decorated with filigree, following the barbarian *horror vacui* concept, while the back-plate bears an unskilful representation of a praying (*orant*) figure; these details indicate a craftsman with particular but unrefined aesthetics (Ungermaier 2020, 320). The simple depiction of the figure on the central inlay also corroborates this impression. The question of what had happened with the central inlay during the past sixty years remains open. The stone in *Fig. 9. 1* displays certain similarities to the gem from Stanišić; however, some specific details based on which it could be connected with the eastern glyptic record are missing.

Decorative stones of Sasanian provenance are not completely unknown in Europe, but they are very rare. One of them is a carnelian cabochon with the representation of two monkeys, an accidental find from Babadag in Romania, near the coast of the Black Sea, with direct analogies among Sasanian gems from the 5th century. This find was interpreted as a trace of transregional contacts established near the Black Sea coast during the Antiquity (Nuțu 2020, 264–265). It could also be brought into connection with the sojourn of eastern military troops

in this region, also attested by some Sasanian coin finds from the vicinity of the fortification at Aksiopolis in Dobruja (Dobrogea) (cf. Ivanišević, Radić 2023, 52, with further references). The Sasanian stamps in the collection of the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest (*Fig. 8. 3*) must also be mentioned here, although their place of discovery is unknown (Gesztelyi 2000, 85–86, Cat. 285–290). As for Western Europe, several items originating from the Near East were found in the territory of Great Britain, with some Sasanian dirhams and a gem with a lion representation (used as inlay on a pendant) from a 7th-century Anglo-Saxon grave found in Silbertswold, Kent (*Fig. 8. 6*). These finds are believed to have reached the Anglo-Saxon kingdom through trade (Arrhenius 1971, 35, 42, *Fig. 40*).<sup>22</sup>

Finally, a detail that also supports the theory about the origin of the gem from Stanišić is its material: the most famous carnelian deposits are in Asia and Africa (*Asia Minor*, Iran, Egypt, India, and Mongolia). Some less-known carnelian variants have deposits in the south Caucasus and Crimea (Thoresen 2017, 191–192, Map 3; Gołębiowska-Tobiasz 2014, 22). Carnelian was highly valued because of its quality and red colour, to which magical properties were attributed. In the Early and High Middle Ages, it was classified in Arabian regions into the second of the three basic gem categories determined based on value. Carnelian was available to the middle class and it was the most common traded gem type. It was used predominantly for making inlays for seal rings (Amar, Lev 2017, 378–380, 383). Worked pieces of carnelian were imported through trade routes in Central and Western Asia up to the Volga Valley; the Volga Bulgarians, who had close relations with the Muslim world, played a special role in the long-distance trade at the time (Gołębiowska-Tobiasz 2014, 22–24). Besides, merchants from the East could also come to Europe for business. Hungarian experts assume that Arabian merchants operated in the Carpathian Basin during the first two thirds of the 10th century, acquiring slaves and luxury items pillaged by the Hungarians during their raids across Europe (Bollók 2015a, 101, n. 124). Aside from mentions and implications in written sources, such an assumption is also supported by a considerable amount of *dirhams* from the late 9th and the first decades of the 10th century in Early Hungarian cemeteries in the northern part of the Carpathian Basin (Kovács 1989, 78–81, 120–134; Gáll, Lezsák 2018, 98–100, 108, Map 3).<sup>23</sup>

All this raises a question: How did the carnel-

ian inlay come into the hands of the craftsmen who made the ring from Stanišić? Was it obtained in the Carpathian Basin or in the area in Eastern Europe Hungarians dwelled in before they moved towards the West? This topic is discussed more in detail in the final chapter of this paper in context with the dating and workshop origin of the ring. As seen, finger-rings with a carnelian inlay are known from Szeged and Eger but also from Eastern European regions (Krylos, Proszvet, Lugovskoe); however, without engraved representations on the gems, as discussed above. Several other rings from Russia and Ukraine have inlays with inscriptions in Arabic and different representations (Rudenko 2015, 163, Ill. 254; 240, Ris. 38. 3–5); one with a lying bull representation is certainly of Sasanian origin (Fig. 5. 9).<sup>24</sup> In this context, we must also comment Abbasid dyed glass stamp with an engraved inscription mentioning Allāh (Fig. 5. 13), set in a finger-ring, which was discovered in the mid-9th century grave in the famous Viking centre of Birka, Sweden (Wärmländer et al. 2015). A very similar Arabic stamp from the 8th–9th century, made of violet almandine and with the engraved Arabic name of the owner Abd Allāh ibn Muhammad, decorated the bezel of a gold ring of the Hungarian King Béla III (1172–1196). It was discovered in the sarcophagus of the king along with other precious items, namely, the ruler's insignia (Nagy 2016, 50–53, Figs. 1–2). The shape of the four-prong ring very much reminds of another type from the 9th–10th century, indicating that it remained a value in the circle of the ruling class in Hungary in the later period of the Middle Ages as well. The arrival of the Arabic stamp in the Carpathian Basin has been connected with the Crusaders, who passed through Hungary on their way towards the Near East. A detailed analysis of the ring established that it had been initially made for an inlay of a different shape. Therefore, the fact that a stone bearing the name of another person from a very distant land, was placed into the setting of the royal ring, bears testimony on the great significance this item had for Béla III (Nagy 2016, 58–59).

#### *Belt appliqués from Stanišić*

Based on the overall look of the four appliqués, namely, their shape, dimensions, and production and decoration techniques, it can be assumed with high certainty that all of them belonged to the same belt set. Two pieces are almost identical (Fig. 4. 1–2), and

the third differs merely by having six instead of five knobs along the edge and that the central leaves of the palmette adorning it are not separated, i.e., their ends are touching (Fig. 4. 3). The fourth mount is different in shape (elongated) and it has a round hole in the middle, but it is decorated in the same style, and its dimensions are similar to the other pieces' (Fig. 4. 4). Presumably, the Early Hungarian grave from Stanišić contained originally more mounts, which the finders distributed among themselves; hence, the set did not arrive into the Museum as a whole. The fact that three mounts and the hoop were sold to the Museum by one finder and the finger-ring by another (the owner of the property) shows that more than one people explored the cemetery at Stanišić. The circumstances under which the mounth No. 5 in the catalogue (Fig. 4. 3) arrived to the Museum are unknown.<sup>25</sup> The set was thin-cast; this technique was characteristic of Early Hungarian workshops (Bollók 2012, 229–231; Bollók 2015b, 174–175).

The trend of wearing belts decorated with heart-shaped mounts was established among the nomadic groups in the 8th–9th century in the regions of Central Asia, the southern Ural, and the northern coasts of the Black Sea (Pletneva 1967, 161–164; Mazhitov 1981, 80, Ris. 55; Grudochko, Botalov 2013, 128–138). In the final decades of the 9th and during the following century, this trend spread across the entire area of Eastern and parts of Central Europe, all the way to Scandinavia and the Lower Danube Valley, i.e., the Early Bulgarian state (e.g., Pletnyov, Pavlova 2000, 98–114; Langó, Patay-Horváth 2016, 567–568 with further references). Belt sets were decorated in the so-called palmette style, a characteristic floral ornamental style also present on other artefacts of the period (clothing and head ornaments, metal parts of sabretaches, sabre hilts, etc.). This distinctive style, inspired by the Antique legacy of the Mediterranean and Near East, spread simultaneously with the heart-shaped mounts trend across Eastern Europe at the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century (Langó 2014, 160, with further references; Bollók 2015b, 225–268). It was present in Hungarian art until the beginning of the 11th century, when it disappeared under the influence of the Western culture and Christianity (Bollók 2015b, 586–589).

The symbolic and status marker role of belts in the cultures of the Early Middle Ages is well-known (e.g., Gáll, Szenthe 2022, 402, with further references). Judging by the fact that belt parts are most commonly found in the most lavish grave ensem-

bles, owning a belt, it would appear, was a reflection of prosperity and the high social rank of the owner. Previous research brought to light many belt sets from graves of the Hungarian aristocracy and military personnel, while such items occur rarely in graves of the wider population (Révész, Nepper 1996, 48–49; Révész 2003, 341; Révész 2006a, 120). A belt set consisted of two or three, sometimes even four, types of mounts – wider and narrower heart- or leaf-shaped pieces bearing very similar or identical decoration,<sup>26</sup> and each grave typically contained up to 20 mounts. As covering a leather strap entirely would require between forty and fifty pieces, the decorative additions evidently did not always cover the entire surface of the belts (Révész, Nepper 1996, 48; Révész 2006a, 120–121). Certain belt sets were decorated with a larger number of metal fittings; for example, the set from Grave 2 of Rétközberencs-Paromdomb had, together with the buckle and the strap-end, of 59 metal parts (Fodor 1996a, 167–168, Figs. 2, 4). Wide mounts were applied with the wider part turned towards the lower edge of the belt. The narrower examples, such as our No. 6 (Fig. 4. 4), were usually used to decorate added, pendent parts or the end of the belt with a strap-end, hanging freely (for reconstructions, see Révész 2006a, 121, Abb. 1; Révész 2014, 11, Fig. 1; Bollók 2015b, 138–139, 11–12. kép). It was not unusual to use heart-shaped mounts to decorate horse harnesses or clothing either (Révész 1996a, 73–75, 38–40. kép; Langó, Patay-Horváth 2016, 575, no. 58).

Even though, by their general appearance, Early Hungarian appliquéés as a whole seem very uniform, a more detailed observation can reveal many variations, and one can, eventually, even gain the impression that identical examples are rare and, thus, suppose that each mount was a unique product and sets were not manufactured in series; this, however, should certainly be taken with caution. Approximately one-third of the known finds from the Carpathian Basin originates from the Upper Tisza Region, the assumed place of the main production centre (Révész, Nepper 1996, 48), while the rest is scattered across the entire Carpathian Basin. Unlike the often-quoted Bulgarian typologies and relatively numerous review papers on belt fittings from that country, which, truth be told, are not consistent from classification's point of view (e.g., Stanilov 1991; Pletnyov, Pavlova 2000; Bonev, Doncheva 2011), the stylistic-typological analysis of the decorative mounts and fittings from the Carpathian Ba-

sin has not received any significant attention and a general typology has not been developed either. Perhaps it is precisely because the numerous variants do not allow for determining clear typological parameters and a founded classification. Only several of the earliest types were singled out in this respect, which had a very wide distribution from the Ural to the Carpathian Basin, and based on which the settling of the Hungarians in new regions could be traced (Schulze-Dörrlamm 1991; Langó 2016; Gáll, Szenthe 2022, 402–405, 3. kép), together with a special type, the so-called ribbed mounts with a highly relieved surface (Langó, Patay-Horváth 2016). As for the dating of the type, heart-shaped belt mounts were more typical of the first half, or even first two thirds of the 10th century; relatively many were reliably dated by coins and found in assemblages with other characteristic Early Hungarian find types (cf. Schulze-Dörrlamm 1991; Révész, Nepper 1996). According to the most recent chronological framework for the material from Transylvania and the Romanian part of Banat, the appliquéés are attributed to the same period (Gáll 2013, 714–716, Pls. 317, 329–334).

Even a thorough review of the respective academic literature yielded no direct analogy for the items at hand. However, several very close analogies of shape and decoration were collected, which may be helpful in determining the parameters of an analysis. They come from very distant regions from the border between Western Asia and Eastern Europe to the Carpathian Basin, which renders any attempt to determine their workshop and origin very difficult. The eastern analogies include a belt mount dated to the 9th century, which is almost identical to our example in terms of its overall appearance; it was found in Karabay in Atyrau Region in western Kazakhstan near the confluence of the Ural (Fig. 10. 1). This piece has an identical frame for the five-leaf palmette at the centre and round knobs along the edge, distributed in the same manner as on our finds. Its dimensions are 2 × 1.5 cm. It was decorated with a five-leaf palmette with indented, thin leaves. No detailed information is available in academic literature on the find context of this artefact (Galkin 1983, 380–382, Abb. 3. 4). Furthermore, two mounts identical to the example from Karabay were found on a belt set from a cemetery under a kurgan in Solodovka (Voronezh Region, Russia). The belt set also comprised four more, narrow mounts decorated in a similar way (Komar 2018, 216, Ris. 83. 30–35). In a more recent publication by A. Komar, these finds

were connected with the Oghuz Turks and Pechenegs, settled in the territories between the coasts of the Black, Caspian and Azov Seas in the 9th–10th centuries (Komar 2018, 215–216). A similar mount should be mentioned from the area of Lake Uyelgi in the Ural Region (Russia), where one of the early homelands of Hungarians was located. The overall appearance of this piece is very similar to the finds from Stanišić; moreover, its whole surface was also gilded. A difference can be noted in the choice of the floral ornament (*Fig. 10. 2*). This appliqué belongs to the second group of belt decorations, very numerous in the region of the southern Ural, which are stylistically comparable to the Oghuz-Pecheneg belts (Grudochko, Botalov 2013, 129–130, *Ris. 2*).

Several loose analogies can also be mentioned from the Carpathian region. The composition of the decoration and, to some extent, the shape of the heart-shaped belt mounts of a belt set from Karos-Eperjesszög II, Grave 52 are closely similar to our finds (Révész 1996a, 111–112, 78–79. *tábla*). The belt set from this grave consists of four groups of mounts, two with a style and typological characteristics akin to the finds from Stanišić (*Fig. 6. 3–14, 18–31*). Wide mounts have three knobs at the edge of the base, with the central one being a bit more prominent (*Fig. 6. 3–14*), like on mount No. 5 from Stanišić. In terms of decoration, there are similarities in the details of the seven-leaf palmette motif with four leaves spread out on the two sides and the remaining three clustered in the centre. Another belt set from Rétközberencs-Paromdomb, Grave 2, in north-eastern Hungary bears a similar composition (*Fig. 10. 3*) (Fodor 1996a, 167–168, *Figs 2, 4*; Istvánovits 2003, 175–178, 165–166. *tábla 13–34, 37–41, 53–84*).<sup>27</sup> It consists of three similar mount types, two wider, and a narrower, all adorned with five-leaf palmette motifs. Even though the examples from Stanišić bear seven-leaf palmette motifs, the style of the small leaves is almost identical, especially the three-leaf compositions in the upper segment. Researchers delved into Early Hungarian archaeology believe that the set from Rétközberencs-Paromdomb is one of the oldest products of the Early Hungarian goldsmith workshop centre in the Upper Tisza Region (Istvánovits 2003, 316). The last analogies to be mentioned are three belt mounts from an accidental discovery, a warrior's grave, in Tomnatic (Nagyösz-Fekete dűlő), in Banat, Romania. This Early Hungarian cemetery was dated to the first three decades of the 10th century (Mesterházy 1996a, 341–342, *Fig. 1*; Gáll 2013, 366–367, 194. *tábla 2–4*). Even though the



*Fig. 10.* Belt ornaments from Eastern Europe and the Carpathian Basin.

*10. kép.* Övveretek Kelet-Európa és a Kárpát-medence területéről.

- 1: Karabay, Kazahstan (Galkin 1983, 382, *Abb. 3. 4*);
- 2: Uyelgi, Russia (Grudochko, Botalov 2013, 130, *Ris. 21*);
- 3: Rétközberencs, Hungary (Fodor 1996a, 167, *Fig. 2*);
- 4: Tomnatic, Romania (Mesterházy 1996a, 342, *Fig. 1*)

apliques from Tomnatic are larger and more skilfully crafted, their shape and the palmettes on them resemble our pieces. They have five symmetrically distributed knobs along the edge and a seven-leaf palmette at the centre (*Fig. 10. 4*). Currently, these are the closest (in geographic terms) analogies to our belt set.

The fourth, narrow mount from Stanišić has no direct or even approximate analogy. A part of it, with three granular knobs, is missing (*Fig. 4. 4*). However, there are distant analogies to the round hole at its centre. Heart-shaped, and somewhat different, appliques with a round hole are part of the set from Grave 52 in Karos-Eperjesszög II (*Fig. 6. 18–31*) (Révész 1996a, 26, 79. *tábla 16–29*). Besides, a mount with a wide, round hole at its centre was found in a hoard of coins, jewellery, and metal decorations in the famous Khazar city of Sarkel in Rostov Oblast (Russia). The assemblage was dated approximately to the mid-10th century (Makarova, Pletneva 1983, 65, 74, *Ris. 2. 7, Ris. 3*; Komar 2018, 212–213, *Ris. 81. 10*).

#### *Hair ring from Stanišić*

Simple, open, metal wire hoops are also typical finds of Hungarian Conquest Period cemeteries (Giesler 1981, 88–89, *Taf. 53. 13*), often found as single items or in pairs in the head area of individuals of different

gender and age. They are most commonly interpreted as braid rings, although some believe that in certain cases they were used as earrings (Gáll 2013, 882; Mesterházy 2013, 484–485, 490). They were mostly made of bronze and silver, and only rarely of gold. Golden braid rings were only used by males. For example, a total of 33 hoops were found in 22 graves at the Szeged-Algyő cemetery; fourteen were bronze, fourteen silver, and only five (found in the graves of three men: Kürti 1980, 325, 346) were made of golden wire. Other examples from the Carpathian Basin and Eastern Europe, mentioned below, corroborated this assumption.

Two ring variants are present: those with touching ends and slightly open ones (Gáll 2013, 641–643, type 1a, b, 307. tábla 1–2). The ring from Stanišić has roughly cut, touching ends (Fig. 2), while a small hoop from the cemetery of Gádoros-Bocskai Street (south-eastern Hungary) has carefully polished, but asymmetrical, touching ends (Medgyesi 2015, 64). A gold hoop from the destroyed mid-10th-century grave of a warrior in the cemetery of Gropoaie-Șiclău (Sikló) in Romania has slightly separated and carefully finished ends (Gáll, Mărginean 2015, 278, Pl. 3. 1). As for Karos, one or two silver or bronze hoops have been recovered from graves of both sexes while golden pieces have been found in richer graves of males (three graves contained golden, and three gilded braid rings; see Révész 1996a, 79). The warrior buried in Grave 52 also had gold braid ring with touching ends (Fig. 6. 1). L. Révész observed that these rings are mostly found in graves of males interred with sabres (Révész 1996a, 79), as was confirmed, for example, by the Early Hungarian cemetery of Kenézlő, where but only silver rings were found in such graves (Jósa 1914, 310–330). However, in the warrior's grave, equipped with a sabre, in Gnandorf, Austria, a silver and a small bronze hoop were found next to the skull (Daim, Lauermaun 2006, 5, Kat. 1, Farbtaf. IV. 2).

It is certainly important to mention that golden hoops are also present in the cemeteries of the Subotcy horizon in Ukraine, connected with Hungarian groups. Golden hoops of a pair were found on the two sides of the skull in the grave of a male interred with a belt, a finger-ring, a horse harness, and archery equipment at Kirovhrad (Fig. 11. 1). The rich grave assemblage from Krylos also contained a pair of hoops made of golden wire, together with a luxurious belt and a finger-ring (Bokiy, Pletneva 1988, 101–102, Ris. 2. 2).

#### *Conclusions: social-historical context and the importance of the finds from Stanišić*

In summary, one can conclude that a cemetery from the earliest stage of the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin was discovered at Mašić Salaš in Stanišić. Today, one cannot say anything more specific about the size of the cemetery and the burial practice because the reports of the locals on its discovery are lacking and scientific research failed to reveal any trace of grave pits. The unique design of the recovered artefacts indicates clearly that the mound served as burial place for the most prominent members of the Early Hungarian elite. The collected (relatively numerous) analogies indicate that the ring, the belt, and the braid ring belonged to the attire of a male. We also believe that all the finds came from the same grave, which, possibly, could have contained other items as well (weapons, horse harness, coins, etc.), but became lost after discovery. Presumably, there was at least one more grave in the

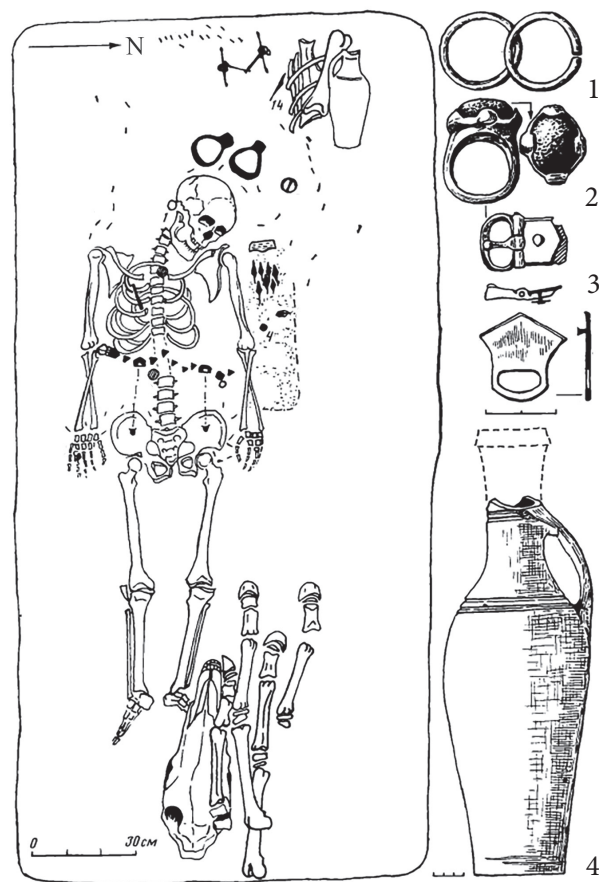


Fig. 11. Warrior's grave. Kirovohrad, Ukraine (Bokiy, Pletneva 1988, 102, Ris. 2)  
11. kép. Fegyveres férfi temetkezése. Kirovograd, Ukrajna (Bokiy, Pletneva 1988, 102, Ris. 2)



mound that had been destroyed by ploughing, as suggested by the bronze pendant gifted to the Museum.<sup>28</sup> If it was part of a two-part pendant set, then a woman was also buried there, since decorations like that were usually used as ornaments on the collar of garments of females (cf. Bálint 1991, 66–69, Taf. XX; Révész, Nepper 1996, 52–55; Révész 2003, 342; Révész 2014, 55–57).

Establishing burials in prominent places, such as prehistoric mounds, was not unusual in the period and region discussed here. It is believed that in the Carpathian Basin, precisely this practice replaced kurgan burials, especially characteristic of eastern peoples (Révész, Nepper 1996, 37–40; Türk 2014, 137–141). Besides 'standard' cemeteries comprising several or several dozen graves, solitary early Hungarian graves on mounds are also known (Türk 2014, 138, n. 8). The discussed luxurious set from Tomnatic in Romania was discovered in one of the two documented graves on a small mound, accidentally discovered at the end of the 19th century. Those graves are believed to be the ones there, since the hill was completely excavated (Gáll 2013, 367). Considering that no graves have been discovered by the archaeological research, one cannot exclude the possibility that the mound at Stanišić was used as a burial place for only one, or possibly two, individuals.

Early Hungarian graves with a luxurious find material comprising characteristic elements have been mostly known thus far from the territory of Hungary and Slovakia, with only few examples from Romania and Austria. The finds from Stanišić move the border of the distribution area of richly equipped graves towards the south-west. The reputable member of the elite buried in the related grave most probably belonged to the first generation of Hungarians conquering the area of today's northern Bačka in the first decades of the 10th century (cf. Čirković 2017, 98, with further references). Our finds fit into the picture reconstructed thus far on the spatial distribution of early Hungarian archaeological traces in Vojvodina; the finds are concentrated mostly in northern Bačka (Fig. 1) and northern Banat (Bálint 1991, 200–201; Radičević, Špehar 2015, 153–154, Fig. 1; Radišić, Uzelac 2018, 30–32). However, this archaeological record includes almost no item that could be determined as part of the most exclusive material culture of the Early Hungarian Period, like the one known from the northern areas of the Carpathian Basin. The only early Hungarian sabre find in Serbia was discovered in the vicinity of Kanjiža

around the middle of the previous century; however, it has become lost since. We have no precise data on the appearance of the sabre. Finds that indicate somewhat better-equipped graves include a gilded rosette on a horse harness from a cemetery between Subotica and Horgoš and a few gilded belt fittings from western Bačka (Radišić, Uzelac 2018, 30–32, with further references). Recently, early Hungarian finds (silver strap-ends, gilded kaftan decorations, and horse harness fittings) found in the vicinity of Bečej in eastern Bačka, have been published (Ramadanski 2023, 22–23, 27). However, the finds from Stanišić differ in terms of both luxury and style from all the finds known from the territory of Vojvodina thus far, and they are also unique in the wider Carpathian area – even more so as according to the statistics, items made completely of gold are not common in general in the early Hungarian record.<sup>29</sup> According to the list compiled by Károly Mesterházy, such finds have only been found on approximately 70 sites (Mesterházy 2013, 490–497). Moreover, it must be highlighted again that the finger-ring from Stanišić represents only the fourth known four-prong ring with a carnelian inlay in the entire Pannonian Basin and the only to feature an animal representation.

In summary, our finds are comparable in many ways to the record of the cemeteries in the Upper Tisza Region, where members of the first generation of Hungarian settlers had been buried (cf. Révész, Nepper 1996, 39–41). Also, similarities could be observed with the find material of cemeteries in the vicinity of Szeged and western Romania, dated to the first half of the 10th century (Fig. 12). However, the ring, the belt mounts, and the braid ring from Stanišić correspond with certain finds from Eastern European regions as well. One should take into account the two-way influences in the exchange of goods and the flow of artistic preferences and know-how between these territories. During the migration of the Hungarian tribes towards eastern Central Europe, they brought along a certain material culture, which continued to develop in the new milieu. Even though Early Hungarian archaeology provided pivotal results based on the rather numerous and well-researched sites, there are still dilemmas/difficulties concerning the identification of the oldest find horizon comprising items that Hungarians brought along from their eastern homelands. The number of items with clearly Eastern origins is limited (cf. Tyurk 2018), but there are also Early Hungarian

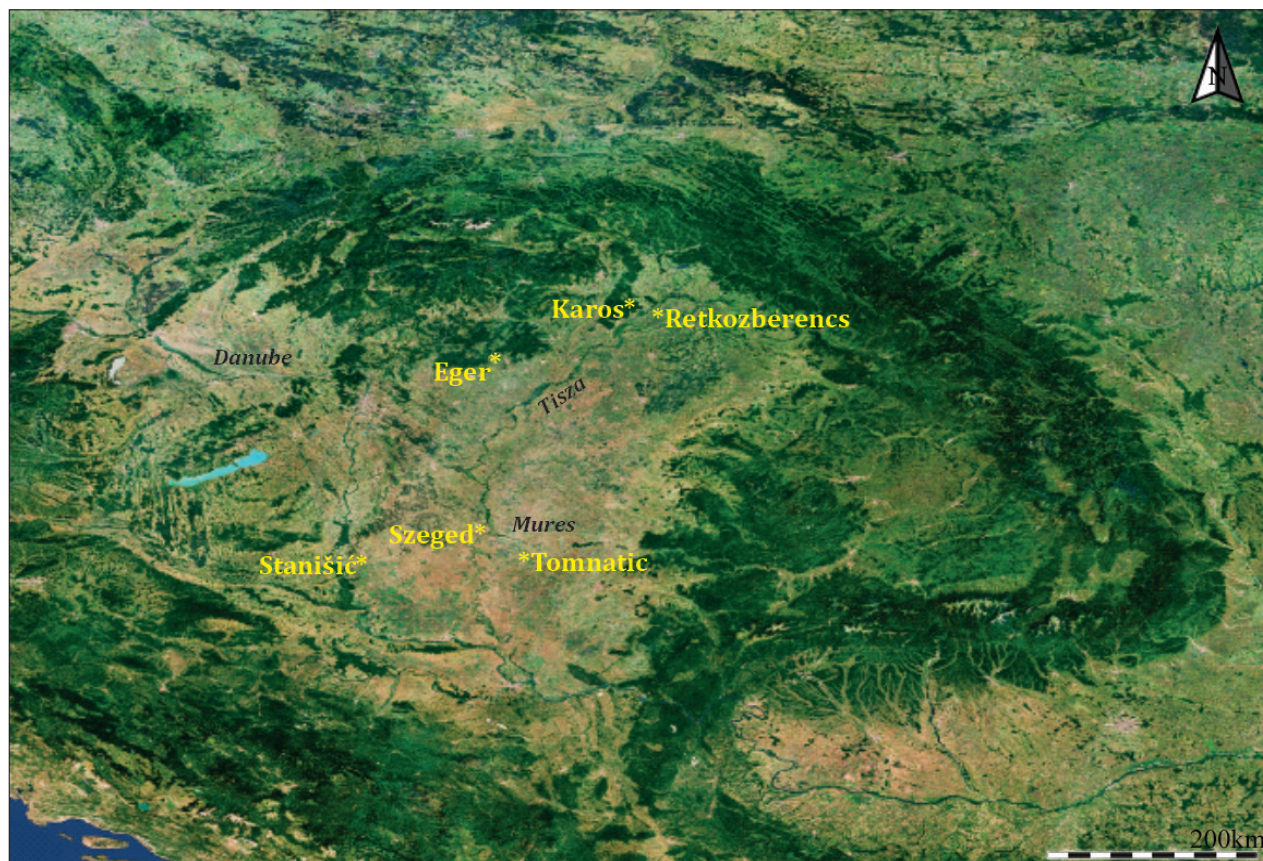


Fig. 12. Location of Stanišić and some main Hungarian Conquest Period sites mentioned in the text (by M. Radišić, base map from [https://kolcseykonyvtar.blog.hu/2020/04/07/helyunk\\_europaban\\_es\\_a\\_vilagban\\_175](https://kolcseykonyvtar.blog.hu/2020/04/07/helyunk_europaban_es_a_vilagban_175))

12. kép. Stanišić és néhány fontosabb, a szövegben említett honfoglalás kori lelőhely elhelyezkedése (készítette: M. Radišić, alaptérkép: [https://kolcseykonyvtar.blog.hu/2020/04/07/helyunk\\_europaban\\_es\\_a\\_vilagban\\_175](https://kolcseykonyvtar.blog.hu/2020/04/07/helyunk_europaban_es_a_vilagban_175))

artefacts made in Pannonian workshops and found in Russia or Ukraine. Certain female headpieces and metal parts of sabretaches bearing stylistic traits characteristic of the Carpathian Basin, found in the steppe along the Black Sea, in the southern Ural region, and the Volga Valley, prove the existence of long-distance trade relationships between these distant regions (Gáll, Lezsák 2018; Lezsák et al. 2018). It is perfectly reasonable to assume that Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin remained in contact with the regions they formerly occupied.

Therefore, the question is: Where were the artefacts from Stanišić made? In the Carpathian Basin, or brought into today's Bačka by the newly-settled Hungarians from Eastern Europe? Relatively much attention was paid in this paper to the analysis of the shape of the ring and the origin of the engraved gem with the unusual, stylised lion representation. The collected data suggest that such rings were in use in both areas but in higher numbers in the Carpathian Basin. The Eastern European analogies from Lugovskoe and Proszvet are older, dated to the 9th

century,<sup>30</sup> while the finds from Karos, Eger, and Szeged were made in the early 10th century. The ring from Krylos is also younger, coeval with the finds mentioned from Hungary (Fig. 5. 6–8). Therefore, bezelled rings were possibly made both in the Carpathian Basin and Eastern Europe, but one cannot tell whether at the same time or not. One can only guess how the craftsman obtained the carnelian gem. Even though the stone bears certain Sasanian traits, it was not necessarily procured somewhere in the East; Hungarians could have obtained it in any military campaign or through contacts with Arabian merchants all over Europe. As for the belt set, we believe that it could sooner have had an Eastern than a Carpathian origin because of its very close analogies in Russia and Kazakhstan.

The presented items of the Early Hungarian material culture from Stanišić supplement the knowledge gained so far on the craftsmanship, art, and interregional contacts of Hungarians in this period. A conclusive interpretation could not be presented in this paper for several reasons; however, an at-

tempt was made to show all the complexity of the intertwining of crafting styles and motifs in a wider geographical context. We hope that future research

in the southern Carpathian Basin, i.e. Vojvodina, provides more specific and valuable archaeological traces of the Early Hungarian Conquest Period.

### Notes

- 1 A bronze bow brooch, with a band-shaped arch, long spring, and a rectangular, twisted foot (Inv. no. 1433), dated roughly to the 3rd–4th century. It is not presented here because it does not belong to the same cultural-chronological circle as the rest of the artefacts.
- 2 This item could not be found in the collection of the museum. It was already in poor condition (falling apart) when it was purchased. Based on the buyer's description, it might have been the lower part of a two-part pendant used for decorating the collar and hems of the neck area of the garment or the overgarment.
- 3 Archaeological documentation of the research is, unfortunately, very scarce. Aside from the field journal, only two photos of the excavation area have been preserved, while field drawings are missing completely. The research was conducted in eight work days. The trenches were parallel, cutting the mound lengthwise, with the following dimensions: 30 × 2.5 m, 13 × 2.5 m, 4 × 4 m, 4 × 4 m and 2 × 2 m. The distance between the first two trenches was 15 m and the largest trench was placed approximately at the centre of the mound. Based on that, a considerable proportion of the site remained unexplored.
- 4 Gemmological analyses determined that the inlay was made of carnelian.
- 5 Such a situation, same as in the case of appliqué No. 3, could indicate that the item was made of lower-quality silver or that the rivets were perhaps even made of bronze (in order to economize on the more expensive precious metal). It also seems that the darkening of the surface may be a mark of the oxidation of the coating applied during conservation (as suggested by the professional conservators of the museum). There was no chance to subject the items to a physico-chemical analysis.
- 6 In Hungarian academic literature, these rings are called '*hólyagos gyűrű*', while in English 'four-knobbed' or 'bezelled finger-rings'.
- 7 Two similar pieces were found in the grave of a male at Tarpa. This, more recent discovery was presented at <https://arpad.abtk.hu/hu/cikkek/magyar-ostorteneti-temacsoport/honfoglalas-kori-temeto-tarpa-hataraban> and <https://josamuzeum.hu/2020/01/21/tarpai-honfoglalas-kori-temeto-feltarasa/> (accessed on 20 February 2023).
- 8 A ring is always depicted, without fail, on reconstructions of burials of the Hungarian elite (see, e.g., Révész 1996a, 111–112, 78. tábla 2; Révész 2003, 341, Fig. 34).
- 9 Graves 11 and 52, of men, and Graves 45 and 47, of women. All four rings belong to the same type, even though the ring from Grave 45 is somewhat different because of the small protrusions pointing outwards on all four sides of the bezel (Révész 1996a, 93, 17. tábla 3, 59. tábla 3, 64. tábla 4, 78. tábla 2).
- 10 Dimensions according to Révész 1996b, 93 (Fig. 19), 99. We believe that this ring was erroneously attributed to Grave 47 in the catalogue (cf. Révész 1996b, 93), instead of Grave 52 (see the drawing of the ring in the original publication, Révész 1996a, 26, 78. tábla 2). The ring on the photo in the catalogue has a green stone inlay, matching the description of the ring in the original publication of the Karos cemetery. Additionally, the ring from Grave 52 was mistakenly presented in another article as a ring from Pusztadobos (see Tyurk 2018, 425, Ris. 1. 7).
- 11 Dimensions according to Bollók 2015a, 96. We did not use the dimensions of the ring from Horváth 2005 because only the height and the width were listed there, without the diameter of the band and the dimensions of the ring bezel, which, we believe, depict the size (massiveness) of the object in a more reliable manner.
- 12 According to the drawing, the outer diameter of the band of the ring from a woman's grave in Harta was 2–2.1 cm, while the diameter of the bezel was 2.2 cm (Langó et al. 2016, 396, Fig. 6). A ring with band dimensions of 2.1 × 2.2 cm, and bezel dimensions of 2.3 × 1.9 cm was found in a richer woman's grave in Szeged (Lőrinczy, Türk 2011, 423, 19. kép 1–3); it is similar to the one from a woman's grave at Győr, which is 2.2 cm in diameter and 2.9 cm high (Horváth 2014, 47, 10. tábla 21).
- 13 S. Pletnyova connected the belt from Krylos with belt finds from a hoard found at Sarkel based on production marks (mould imprints). Furthermore, round belt mounts (dividers) with two or three hanging, elongated lozenge-shaped pendants (see Komar 2018, 390, Ris. 80. 14–15, 17) have analogies in Karos-Eperjesszög, Cemetery I, Grave 1 and Cemetery II, Grave 36 (Révész 1996a, 4. tábla 41–43, 51. tábla 4–6).
- 14 Unlike in the Early Hungarian cemeteries in the Hungarian part of the Carpathian Basin, where no belt fitting is known from the grave of a female, such examples do exist in Eastern Europe. Along with the mentioned grave from Proszvet, burials of female individuals with belts can be mentioned from the necropolis of Bolsije Tigany (e.g., Halikova 1976, 61–64, 6–9. kép). However, that cemetery also includes graves

- with weapons of, assumedly, males (warriors), which also contain earrings, usually interpreted as female ornaments (Halikova 1976, 58, 3. kép). Such examples show that caution is needed in interpretation, as no strict line can be drawn between the typically male and typically female material culture.
- 15 The diameter of the carnelian inlay is 1.6 cm, while the dimensions of the head with ball-shaped knobs are 2.5 × 2.5 cm, similar to the ring from Stanišić. The find-spot and the fragmentation level of the ring raise the possibility that it was an offering, and originally did not belong to the deceased woman.
  - 16 The analyses were conducted by Dr. Zoran Miladinović, a geologist from the Faculty of Mining and Geology in Belgrade.
  - 17 For example, an opulent necklace and chest ornament, part of the treasure attributed to the German Empress Agnes (1043–1065), which consist of series of long golden chains with numerous inlays with Antique engraved gems and cameos, precious stones, and pearls attached at their ends (see Schulze-Dörrlamm 2015, 167–171).
  - 18 Besides finger-rings, several pendants known with inlaid gems and cameos are known from the Early Hungarian horizon (see Nepper 2003; Bollók 2015a, 95–96, Fig. 7. 4–5, Fig. 8. 1–3).
  - 19 Because of the very unusual manner in which this representation was depicted, at the start of research we had a dilemma on whether it is modern forgery (theoretically, the discoverer could engrave it into the stone to increase the value of the ring). Because of that, we sought the opinion of specialists in Antique glyptics, Revd. professor M. Henig (University of Oxford), G. Tassinari (State University of Milan), and doc. Dr. I. Kaić (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb). I. Kaić kindly contacted the authors to discuss this example, and we thank her most cordially for that. All the experts concur that the gem is original. According to the estimations of M. Henig and I. Kaić, the gem represents a local variation of Sasanian *intaglio* with a lion representation, and it was not intended to be a stamp, while G. Tassinari pointed out similarities with simple *Alsengemmen* from the High Middle Ages of Western Europe, which, however, always were made of dark glass and bore no representations of quadrupeds (cf. Schulze-Dörrlamm 1990).
  - 20 Figures on the gems are almost always facing left, so that they would be turned right on the impression, which is more suitable for the viewers' perspective.
- Our 'lion' is facing right, since it is a positive, i.e., it was not intended to be used as a stamp.
- 21 The find was discovered during research conducted at Mikulčice in second half of the 1950s.
  - 22 For the site, see Green 2017, <https://www.caitlingreen.org/2017/07/Sasanian-finds-in-early-medieval-britain.html> (accessed on 20 February 2023).
  - 23 In a wider European context, the Carpathian Basin is believed to have been a peripheral area of long-distance trade during the 9th century (McCormick 2001, 376, n. 63).
  - 24 For examples with different decorative inlays from the area of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture, see [http://donovedenie.ru/blog/khazarskie\\_perstni\\_s\\_izobrazhenijami/2014-11-21-502](http://donovedenie.ru/blog/khazarskie_perstni_s_izobrazhenijami/2014-11-21-502) and [http://donovedenie.ru/foto/perstni-kolca/saltovskij\\_persten\\_s\\_tamgoj.jpg](http://donovedenie.ru/foto/perstni-kolca/saltovskij_persten_s_tamgoj.jpg) (accessed on 27 January 2023).
  - 25 The inventory book of the museum contains no data on this find. Upon taking over the Archaeological Medieval Collection, senior curator of the City Museum Sombor, Viktorija Uzelac, found all four pieces with a number written on the back. The first applique (Fig. 4. 1) bears No. 1435, the second (Fig. 4. 2) No. 1436, while the remaining two (Fig. 4. 3–4) were assigned the same number, 1437. The fragmented applique with a round hole (Fig. 4. 4) is listed in the inventory book under No. 1437, which means that appliqué (Fig. 4. 3) arrived in the collection at a later point. It was added to this group of finds without note on when and under which circumstances it was obtained.
  - 26 The most detailed insight into the repertoire of belt sets is provided by the catalogue of the exhibition entitled *The Ancient Hungarians*, 1996.
  - 27 A cast-in-one four-knobbed ring belonging to the first group by Horváth was found in the grave (Horváth 2005, 3. kép l; Istvánovits 2003, 166. tábla 51).
  - 28 See endnote 2.
  - 29 According to some earlier estimates, about 1,500 sites have been recorded in the Carpathian Basin, that is, about 30,000 graves from the 10th–11th centuries (Langó 2005, 188; Mesterházy 2013, 489–490). The number of sites was revised in a recent study by L. Révész; he collected and analysed ca. 850 burial sites located east of the Danube in the Carpathian Basin (Révész 2020, 473–481).
  - 30 The dating of these burials cannot be accepted at face value, considering especially that these rings are assumed to have been used for a long time (which might be supported by that most rings found in graves are fragmented).

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A LEGDÉLEBBI JELENTŐS HONFOGLALÁS KORI LELET.  
NÉHÁNY BÁCSCSA TERÜLETÉN ELŐKERÜLT TÁRGY JELENTŐSÉGÉRŐL

Összefoglalás

Mašić Salaš lelőhelye Stanišić határában, Zombortól (Észak-Bácska, Szerbia) kb. 15 km-re északkeletre fekszik (1. kép). A lelőhely az 1950-es évek közepén vált ismertté, amikor földmunkák teljesen elpusztítottak egy kora középkori temetőt a Sveti Ante (Szt. Antal) dombon: hogy a terepet kiegyenlítse, a földtulajdonos gépekkel ledózeroltatott jó másfél métert a halom tetejéből, majd a friss felszín mélyszánotta. A legtöbb sírlelet megsemmisült vagy elveszett; a Zombori Városi Múzeumba csupán néhány tárgy jutott el. A földtulajdonos egy aranygyűrűt (Kat. 2; 3. kép) adott el a múzeumnak, illetve odaajándékozott egy késő antik fibulát és egy szív alakú csüngőt (ez utóbbi mára elveszett; talán egy többtagú ruha-nyakveret csüngős része volt). A lelőhelyről fennmaradt leletanyag többi részét — egy aranykarikát (Kat. 1; 2. kép) és három aranyozott veretet (Kat. 3, 4, 6; 4. kép 1–2, 4) egy másik, közeli faluból származó lakostól vásárolt meg az intézmény; az eladó állítása szerint még több leletet is összegyűjtött Mašić Salaš környékén, de elvesztette őket. Nincs adat a negyedik veret (Kat. 5; 4. kép 3) előkerülési körülményeiről. A késő antik fibulát leszámítva minden tárgy a korai honfoglaló fémművességhez kapcsolható.

A temető méretéről és rítusáról sajnos semmit nem lehet tudni: nem maradtak fenn a helyiek beszámolóí a felfedezésről és a hitelesítő ásatás is eredménytelenül zárult. A megőrződött tárgyak kivitele, minősége alapján a halom a honfoglaló elit néhány megbecsült tagjának temetkezési helyéül szolgált. A felgyűjtött párhuzamok alapján a gyűrű, az övveretek és a hajfonat-karika egy férfi öltözékének részei lehettek; valószínűleg ugyanazon sírból származnak. Ez a temetkezés minden bizonnyal további kiegészítőket és feltehetően egyéb tárgyakat (fegyvereket, lószerszámot, érméket, stb.) is tartalmazott, melyek azonban a megtalálást követően elvesztek.

A gyűrű (3. kép) a fejesgyűrűk csoportjába tartozik; e típus különösen kedvelt ékszer volt a 9–10. században Kelet-Európa és a Kárpát-medence területein (5. kép). Kelet-európai párhuzamai (Lugovszkoje, Proszvet) idősebbek, a 9. századra keltezhetőek (5. kép 7–8), míg a karosi (6. kép 1), egri és szegedi példányok a 10. század

elején készülhettek. Az ukrajani Krilos lelőhelyéről származó ékszer szintén fiatalabb, az említett magyarországi párhuzamokkal egykorú (5. kép 6). A gyűrű fejét díszítő vésett féldrágakő egyedi darab; története sokadik fejezeteként került újrahasznosításra, mint betétkő. A gemma nem klasszikus antik *intaglio*, és direkt párhuzamai sem fellelhetők; emellett az állat (oroszlán)ábrázolás stílusa is egyedi. A követ a komplex gemmológiai elemzés karneolként azonosította; megállapítást nyert az is, hogy a készítő meglehetősen sekélyen karcolta be az oroszlánalakot a kő felszínébe, azaz a véset eredetileg nem pecsétlőnek készült (7. kép). Az állatábrázolás bizonyos elemeinek legjobb párhuzamait 5–7. századi Szászánida pecsétlőkön (8. kép 1–3, 5–6), valamint egy, a csehországi Mikulčice 9. századi temetőjéből származó szíjvégen (9. kép) leltük fel. Csak találgatni lehet, hogy jutott a gyűrűt készítő mesterember a karneol gemmához, mely, bár Szászánida vonásokat hordoz, nem feltétlenül keleten készült: a magyarok szert tehetek rá kalandozásaik során vagy az Európa-szerte jelen levő arab kereskedők révén is.

Kinézetük alapján — ideértve a formai jegyeket, a méretet, a díszítést és az alkalmazott technológiákat — a négy övveret minden valószínűséggel ugyanazon övkészlet része volt (4. kép). Pontos párhuzamuk nem ismert a szakirodalomban, ám a forma és a díszítés számos közeli analógiája fellelhető, melyek Nyugat-Ázsia és Kelet-Európa határától a Kárpát-medencéig szóródnak. A keleti párhuzamok között említhető egy 9. századi darab Karabajból (Atirau régió, Nyugat-Kazahsztán; 10. kép 1) és annak két pontos analógiája a solodovkai kurgán (Voronyezs régió, Oroszország) alatt feltárt temetőből. A Karos-Eperjesszög II. temetőjének 52. sírjában talált övkészlet szív alakú vereteinek mintája (és némiképp formája is) szintén közeli párhuzamot mutat a stanišići leletekkel (6. kép 3–14, 18–31). Emellett a karosi sírban eltemetett harcos szintén érintkező végű arany hajfonatkarikát viselt (6. kép 1), mely nagyban emlékeztet az itt közölt példányra (2. kép).

A legtöbb ismert, luxusjellegű tárgyakat tartalmazó korai honfoglaló temetkezés a mai Magyarország és Szlovákia területén került elő; csak néhány sír, illetve lelet ismert Romániából

vagy Ausztriából. A Stanišić határában előkerült leletegyüttes kitolja e temetkezések elterjedésének délnyugati határát. Az elpusztított sírban nyugalomra helyezett férfi minden bizonnyal a honfoglalók első generációjának elitjéhez tartozott, és a 10. század első évtizedeiben, a mai Észak-Bácska területén érte a halál. Ez a lelet illeszkedik a korai honfoglaló emléanyag vajdasági szóródásáról korábban alkotott képbe: e jelenségek és leletek elsősorban Észak- és Nyugat-Bácska területén koncentrálódnak

(1. kép). Összefoglalásképp elmondható, hogy a közölt leletek számos hasonlóságot mutatnak az első generációs honfoglaló elit Felső-Tisza-vidéken feltárt temetkezéseivel, valamint a Szeged környékén és Nyugat-Románia területén előkerült, a 10. század első felére keltezett emlékanyaggal (12. kép). Ugyanakkor a stanišići gyűrű, övveretek és hajfonatkarika párhuzamai ismertek Kelet-Európából is; így a kérdés, hogy vajon hol készülhettek pontosan ezek a tárgyak, továbbra is nyitott marad.