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## MAKE ME A STAR. CRESCENT HOOP EARRINGS FROM THE SOUTHWESTERN EDGE OF THE KHAGANATE – IDENTITY AND STATUS MARKERS<sup>4</sup>

Pia ŠMALCELJ NOVAKOVIĆ<sup>1</sup>  – Anita RAPAN PAPEŠA<sup>2</sup> 

*Earrings with a star-shaped pendant (also mentioned in literature as *zvjezdolike*, *Ohringe mit Sternzier*, and *Ohringe mit Sternverzierung*) are one of the rare types in the Avar cultural circle to which researchers pay special attention and dedicate separate papers. In recent times, archaeological research on the Avar Period in Croatia has made significant progress, primarily in processing previous results and discovering new sites in the eastern parts of the country, and especially in the easternmost parts, the area of Western Syrmia (Srijem). Renewed research efforts in the microregion brought to light a relatively wide variety of such earrings with diverse morphological characteristics and decoration, as well as material choices and, accordingly, production methods. This study aims to assess hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant as markers of status and identity using existing typology and models while emphasising the differences in their production and materials, as well as the late 8th-century fashion trends.*

*A csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalók (*zvjezdolike*, *Ohringe mit Sternzier*, *Ohringe mit Sternverzierung*) az avar anyagi kultúra egy ritka típusát képviselik, melyre a kutatás különös figyelmet fordít; számos önálló tanulmány született már, melynek e tárgycsoport áll a középpontjában. A horvátországi avar kutatás a közelmúltban jelentős előrelépést ért el e leletcsoport értékelésében, elsősorban a korábbi kutatási eredmények újraértékelése, illetve számos új lelőhely felfedezése révén, melyek elsősorban az ország keleti területein, különösen a legkeletebbi régióban, a Nyugat-Szerémségben koncentrálnak. Az e területen ismételt fellendülő, intenzív kutatás eredményeképp számos, igen változatos típusokat képviselő fülbevaló került elő, melyek nem csupán kialakításukban és díszítésükben, de az anyagválasztás és az alkalmazott technológia tekintetében is eltérnek egymástól. Jelen tanulmány a csillag alakú csüngővel ellátott karikafülbevalók egyszerű és sarlós változatainak tipológiai elemzésén keresztül azok lehetséges státusz- és identitásjelző szerepét, illetve a 8. századi divat kapcsolódó trendjeit vizsgálja.*

**Keywords:** earrings with a star-shaped pendant, crescent earrings, (Late) Avar Period, Eastern Croatia, Western Syrmia (Srijem), Early Middle Ages, identity, social position

**Kulcsszavak:** csillagdiszes fülbevaló, lunulás fülbevaló, (késő) avar kor, Kelet-Horvátország, Nyugat-Szerémség, korai középkor, identitás, társadalmi helyzet

### *Introduction and research history*

Researchers have always been interested in the chronological position and production technique of crescent hoop earring types with a star-shaped pendant primarily because of the possible connection between them and the ethnic identity of their wearers (Čilinska 1975, 70). Such earrings come from

various places, including the Pontic Region, the Dnieper Valley, Pannonia, the Lower Danube Region, Transylvania, Sicily, and northern Italy (Vinski 1952). This essay focuses on crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant in the Avar cultural circle in the western Syrmia microregion (*Fig. 1*). It aims to assess them as markers of status and identity using existing typology and models, while also

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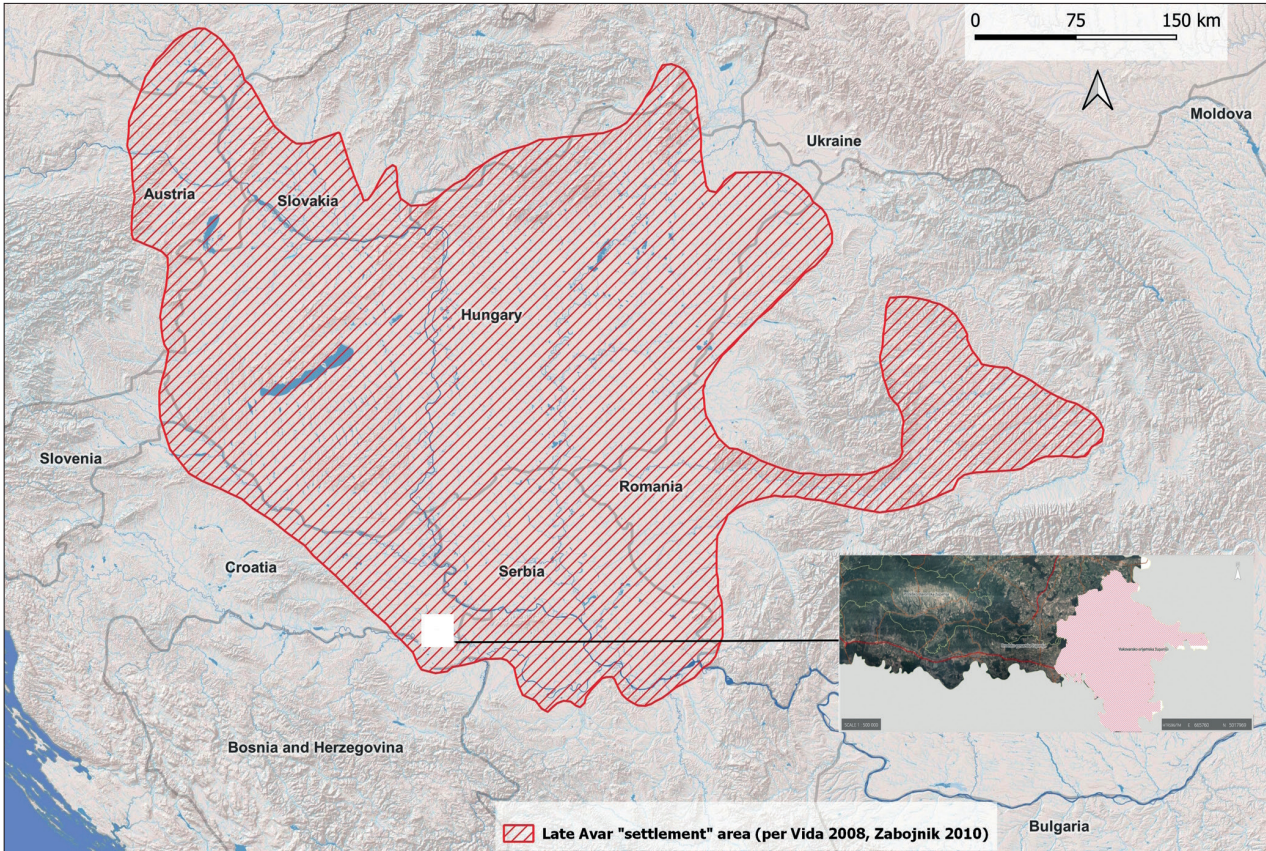


Fig. 1. Position of Western Syrmia (Vukovarsko-Srijemska County) in the Late Avar settlement area (after Vida 2008; Zabošnjik 2010) (created in QGIS on geoportal.dgu.hr, and paint.net by Jere Drpić and Pia Šmalcelj Novaković)  
 1. kép. Nyugat-Szerémség helyzete a késő avar szállásterület viszonylatában (Vida 2008; Zabošnjik 2010 nyomán; QGIS-ben készítette a geoportal.dgu.hr és paint.net platformokon Jere Drpić és Pia Šmalcelj Novakovic)

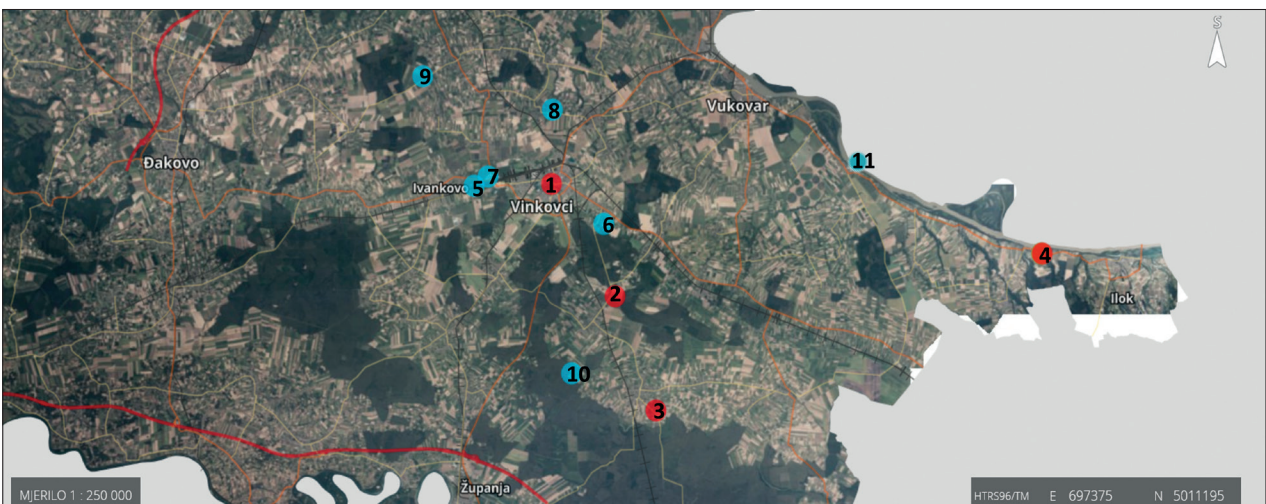


Fig. 2. Sites with star-pendant crescent hoop earrings in Western Syrmia (red: cemeteries, blue: stray finds).  
 1: Vinkovci-68. BVP bb; 2: Privlaka-Gole njive; 3: Otok-Gradina; 4: Šaregrad-Klopare; 5: Vinkovačko Novo Selo-Mokro Polje; 6: Mirkovci-Malat; 7: Ivankovo-Dren; 8: Ostrovo-Gorica; 9: Markušica-Čeretinci; 10: Privlaka-Zakota; 11: Sotin-Vrućak (created on geoportal.dgu.hr and paint.net by Pia Šmalcelj Novaković)  
 2. kép. Csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalók lelőhelyei Nyugat-Szerémség területén (piros: temető, kék: szórványlelet).  
 1: Vinkovci-68. BVP bb; 2: Privlaka-Gole njive; 3: Otok-Gradina; 4: Šaregrad-Klopare; 5: Vinkovačko Novo Selo-Mokro Polje; 6: Mirkovci-Malat; 7: Ivankovo-Dren; 8: Ostrovo-Gorica; 9: Markušica-Čeretinci; 10: Privlaka-Zakota; 11: Sotin-Vrućak (készítette Pia Šmalcelj Novakovic a geoportal.dgu.hr és paint.net platformokon)



emphasising the differences in their production and materials, as well as the late 8th-century fashion trends (for more on the state of research on the Avar Period in northern Croatia and particularly newly discovered sites in Western Sylvania, see Šmalcelj Novaković 2022a; Rapan Papeša 2023).

Nándor Fettich's first significant publication on Avar Period crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant from the study area was on such jewellery from Čađavica, in which he connected the finds to the Kutrigur cultural circle (Fettich 1942). Since then, early medieval earrings with a star-shaped pendant, in general, got the most attention from Zdenko Vinski in his now well-known work entitled *Star-shaped earrings in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, with special reference to the wearers of Čađavica silver jewellery* (Vinski 1952; Vinski 1955). Vinski created a typological classification of the variants known to him and observed that they belonged to several different workshop (and cultural) circles, linking them with

- a) earring workshops with a Byzantine-Mediterranean character – enlisted here were the specimens from Golubić and Solin, which have significant morphological similarities with finds from Sicily and could be dated to the 7th century, or possibly even later;
- b) earring workshops from the Pannonian Danube Region – represented by finds from Biskupija, Čađavica, Coșovenii de Jos, and possibly Gâmbas. Most pieces were made of bronze, some of poor silver alloys, using a variety of techniques, including pressblech, filigree, granulation, and sometimes casting;
- c) the workshops of old Russian silver and gold specimens (10th–13th centuries) near Kyiv, following the Pontic goldsmith tradition.

Furthermore, according to Vinski, some luxury earrings from the territory of Slovakia (Zemiansky Vrbovok) and Moravia (Rybešovec) were imported from Byzantium rather than made locally. Besides, he drew a significant conclusion based on the similarity between luxurious specimens from the Danube Region and Ukraine, hypothesising that some specimens from the Danube workshop circle show the influence of Pontic metallurgy; he concluded that these type variants were likely favoured by Slavic peoples rather than Kutrigurs, based on the conclusions of Rybakov and Werner (Werner 1950; Werner 1960) about the so-called Slavic bow brooches (Vinski 1952, 40–45).

A few years later, Stojan Dimitrijević published four newly discovered graves from the Avar Period cemetery of Otok-Gradina/Mandek's Vineyard, one of which contained a pair of luxurious silver crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant. He then devoted his work to researching crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant and their wearers in an Avar context (Dimitrijević 1957).

Maria Comșa categorised crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant into two types, placing the finds from Romania in a broader European context. Her Type I includes earrings with a flat star-shaped pendant from the second half of the 6th and the first half of the 7th centuries, while Type II specimens have a relief or convex star-shaped pendant with a central bulge, and could be dated to between the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 9th century (Comșa 1971).

In addition to identifying and categorising earrings with a star-shaped pendant and making an attempt to date and define the related workshop circle, Zlata Čilinská (Čilinská 1975) presented the only comprehensive study of Avar Period (7th- and 8th-century) women's jewellery in Central Europe, with a focus on the northwestern parts of the Khaganate (Čilinská 1975). Earrings with a star-shaped pendant appear in the Avar cultural circle in three basic designs: Variant A has a simple hoop, lacking the crescent part; the lower part of the hoop of Variant B is considerably thicker than the upper one; and the bottom half of the hoop of Variant C is crescent-shaped (Čilinská 1975, Abb. 1: Type II, Variants A, B, C, 65). While simple bronze specimens were cast in one piece, more luxurious ones were typically made of silver, and the star-shaped attachment was made separately using the pressblech and granulation techniques (Čilinská 1975, 70–72). Examples of the oldest Variant A (where the lower part of the hoop does not widen into a crescent) have been found, among other places, in Pastyrskoe in southern Ukraine, a Lombard cemetery in Castel Trosino (Italy), and the Byzantine fortress of Sadovec-Kale (today in Bulgaria; one of the first fortresses taken by the Avars at the beginning of the 7th century). The dating of Variant A is also supported by specimens found recently in the Pókaszepetk cemetery (Hungary) and Čađavica (but not with its recent, new dating to the late 7th century: Demo 2014, 52). Čilinská claims that variants A, B, and C in the Carpathian Basin had come out of fashion by the mid-7th century, the end of the 7th century, and the end of the

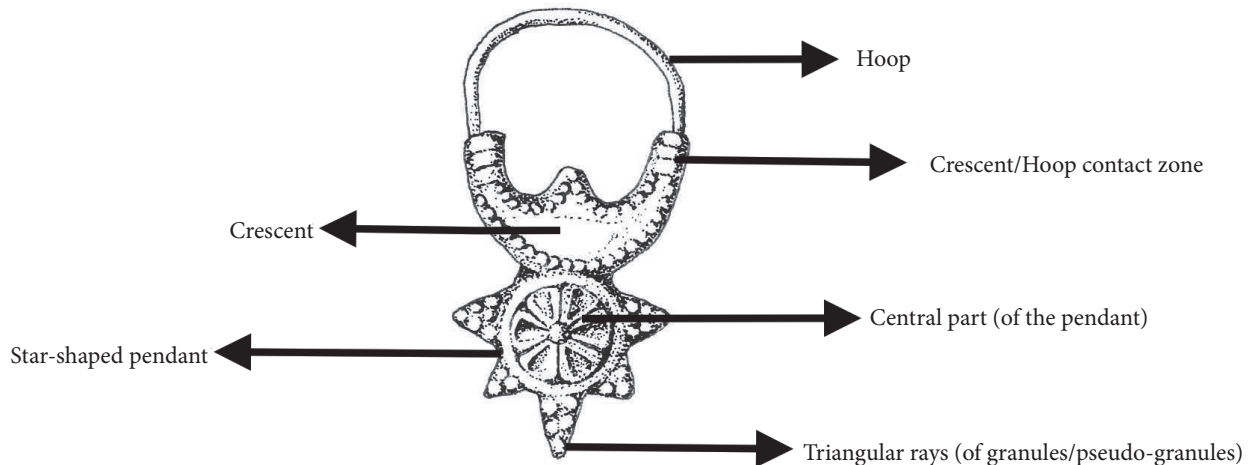


Fig. 3. Parts of star-pendant crescent hoop earrings  
3. kép. A csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalók részei

8th century, respectively. She hypothesised that the type was not in use in the Tisza Region and east of the Tisza River. However, her theory was refuted by the discovery of some simple bronze earrings with star-shaped pendants at Tiszafüred (Garam 1995, 276–277; Čilinská 1975, 70–72).

Based on research mostly in the region of today's Romania and general overviews, Dan Gh. Teodor (Teodor 1995) divided and classified crescent earrings with a star-shaped pendant into four types. Specimens of Type I, dating to the 6th century, were cast; their hoops lack the crescent part but have a solid or hollow, round pendant with a triangular ornament consisting of three or five granules. Type II earrings were also cast; they appeared first at the end of the 6th century, were most popular in the 7th, and still worn occasionally in the 8th. The related specimens have a narrow extension at the lowest point of the hoop and a round pendant with five radially arranged triangles of granule clusters, resembling a star, hanging from it. Most Type III pieces were cast, but pressblech examples are also known. This type dates back to the 7th and 8th centuries, occasionally also appearing at the beginning of the 9th century. Such earrings had a crescent in the lower part of the hoop and a round pendant with five radially arranged triangles made of granules, resembling a star. All Type IV earrings were cast at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries. This variant is a 'degenerate', still featuring a crescent on the bottom arc of the hoop, but only triangular 'spikes' made of granules attached to the bottom edge of the crescent/hoop instead of a star-shaped pendant.

The findings of the excavation of the Tiszafüred cemetery were published exactly twenty years after

Čilinská's comprehensive study. Crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant were found in 24 graves in Tiszafüred, refuting the hypothesis that the type did not appear east of the Tisza River (Garam 1995, Fig. 149. 1–12). All variants feature more or less similar decoration: a star-shaped pendant attached to the lower arc of a crescent connected to the upper part of the hoop with a prominent decorative element on either side; the surface of the pendant is enhanced with cast pseudo-granules and geometric lines, and the protruding spikes or rays are actually pseudo-granule clusters (Garam 1995, 276–278). Garam classified the cast crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant from Tiszafüred into four variants; all pieces have been recovered from rich graves containing cast openwork discs ('Scheiben'), torques, numerous bead jewellery items (almost always consisting of melon seed and millet beads), and even other types of earrings (three-bead earrings and oval earrings with a prismatic bead pendant: Variants V and X in Čilinská's typology; see Čilinská 1975, Fig. 1. 65). The youngest features (Graves 72, 114/a, and 1231) also comprised cast strap ends with tendril decoration, and the others were usually connected to the grave horizon of tendril-and-gryphon-decorated cast belt sets. The oldest specimens were found in an area of the cemetery with younger graves with metal sheet belt fittings (Garam 1995, 278). One of the oldest specimens from Tiszafüred, Grave 246, belongs to Variant B in Zlata Čilinská's system and dates to the first half of the 7th century; however, it did not appear on Tiszafüred until the second half of the century, close in time to the oldest burials with pressblech bronze belt fittings. Garam agrees with





Fig. 4. Silver star-pendant crescent hoop earrings in Western Syrmia. 1: Otok-Gradina/Mandekov vinograd, Grave 3D (A. Šmalcelj); 2: Šarengard-Klopore, Grave 29 (E. Balić); 3: Šarengard-Klopore, Grave 40 (E. Balić); 4: Šarengard-Klopore, Grave 5 (E. Balić); 5: Ivankovo-Dren (I. Sokola); 6: Mirkovci-Malat (I. Sokola); 7: Sotin-Vrućak (M. Ilkić); 8: Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 204 (by Mirjana Pjevac and Anita Rapan Papeša)

4. kép. Ezüstből készített csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalók Nyugat-Szerémség területéről. 1: Otok-Gradina/Mandekov vinograd, 3D sír (A. Šmalcelj); 2: Šarengard-Klopore, 29. sír (E. Balić); 3: Šarengard-Klopore, 40. sír (E. Balić); 4: Šarengard-Klopore, 5. sír (E. Balić); 5: Ivankovo-Dren (I. Sokola); 6: Mirkovci-Malat (I. Sokola); 7: Sotin-Vrućak (M. Ilkić); 8: Privlaka-Gole njive, 204. sír (készítette Mirjana Pjevac és Anita Rapan Papeša)

this dating but disagrees with the affiliation because she thinks that in Tiszafüred (and the whole of Transdanubia), the link between the type and the attire of Avar women is unquestionable. Zdenko Vinski believes that all cast star-shaped earrings were made by workshops in the Danube Region between the 7th and 11th centuries; he dated the Avar specimens to the 8th century, while Maria Comşa emphasised that the variants belonging to Avars did not appear before 670–680, and the second wave coming from Transylvania supports the dating of the type to the 8th century. Garam's conclusions contradict the one drawn by Dimitrijević, who dated all earrings with a star-shaped pendant, like the ones from Novi Banovci and including most pieces from Tiszafüred, to the 10th–11th century; in doing so, she refers to A. I. Ajbabin's observation that star-shaped earrings became popular in the Dnieper Region after the Khazar destruction at the beginning of the 8th century. Garam continues, 'Around this time, in Tiszafüred, as well as in the grave horizon with belt sets with gryphon and tendril decoration, the first cast star-pendant earrings appeared without predecessors or prototypes.' (Garam 1995, 278–80) The Pastirskoye brooch fragment does not fit into the usual Avar find material, so it possibly ended up in Grave 935 with the original owner or someone who took the brooch with him. Additionally, the grave contained melon seed beads and an earring with a changeable pearl

pendant. According to Garam, earrings with a star-shaped pendant appeared rather suddenly in the find horizon of the earliest cast belt sets (besides a single specimen in Grave 246, assigned to the horizon of the youngest bronze sheet belt sets, which overlaps with it), suggesting that the type is connected to the arrival of the supposed Khazar wave. Therefore, Grave 935 might be the final resting place of either a Slavic person whose traditions involved wearing a Pastirskoye-style brooch or of someone with a Khazar ethnic identity for whom this brooch was looted (Garam 1995, 278–280).

Danica Staššiková-Štukovská analysed the hoop/crescent contact zone, crescent, and pendant variants of finds from mostly the northern part of the Carpathian Basin (today's Slovakia) and classified them into four types. Type 1 (variants A–G) includes earrings with a double crescent and a star-shaped pendant with three rays; Type 2 (variants A–G) comprises earrings with a double crescent and a star-shaped pendant with five rays; Type 3 is for earrings with a triple crescent and a star-shaped pendant with three rays; while earrings with a triple crescent and a star-shaped pendant with five rays were classified as Type 4. She believed, based upon the wide variety of specimens, that these earrings were luxury artefacts in the 7th and 8th centuries, produced under Byzantine influence but in local workshops, and worn by Slavs (Staššiková-Štukovská 1999).

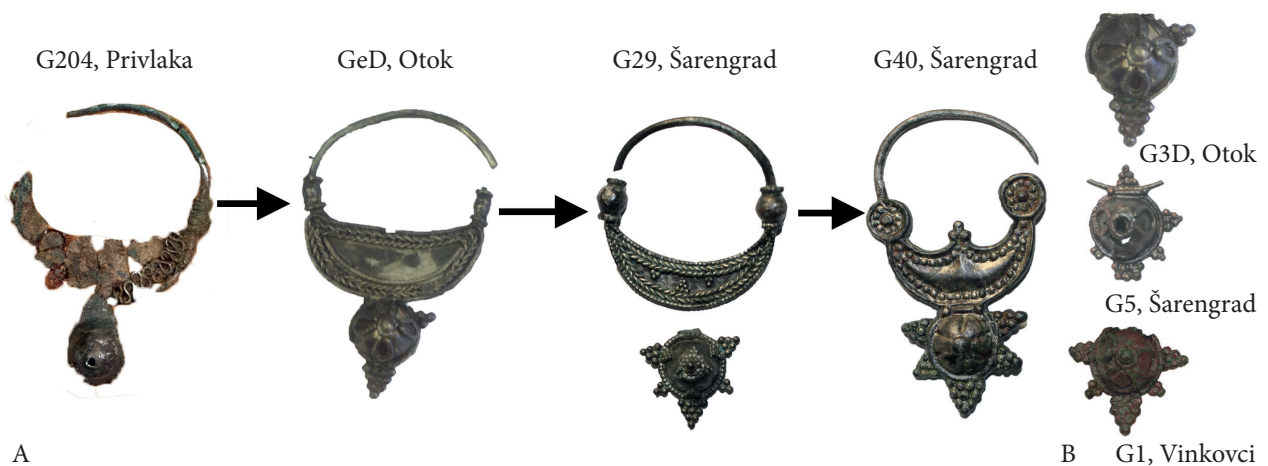


Fig. 5. A: Evolution of the crescent/hoop contact zone on silver star-pendant crescent hoop earrings in Western Symia. Left to right: Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 204; Otok-Gradina, Grave 3D; Šareograd-Klopore, Grave 29; Šareograd Klopore, Grave 40. B: similarity of decoration concept of the star-shaped pendants. Up to down: Otok-Gradina, Grave 3D; Šareograd-Klopore, Grave 5, and Vinkovci-68. BVP bb, Grave 1

5. kép. A: Az alsó és felső ív találkozási pontjának fejlődése a Nyugat-Szerémségből származó csillag alakú csüngős ezüstművelőkon. Balról jobbra: Privlaka-Gole njive, 204. sír; Otok-Gradina, 3D sír; Šareograd-Klopore, 29. sír; Šareograd Klopore, 40. sír. B: a csillag alakú csüngők díszítésének hasonlósága. Fentről lefelé: Otok-Gradina, 3D sír; Šareograd-Klopore, 5. sír, Vinkovci-68. BVP bb, 1. sír



G3D, Otok



G29, Šarengrad



Vinkovačko Novo Selo

Fig. 6. Identical filigree decoration on the crescents of (up to down) Otok-Gradina, Grave 3D; Šarengrad-Klopare, Grave 29; and Ivankovo-Dren, stray find

6. kép. Azonos filigrándíszítés különböző példányok sarlóin. Fentről lefelé: Otok-Gradina, 3D sír; Šarengrad-Klopare, 29. sír; Ivankovo-Dren, szórványlelet

In his comprehensive study of Avar Period finds, Peter Stadler gave relatively little consideration to earrings with a star-shaped pendant. He generally divided them into a small number of forms and merely noted casting as the applied technique in his type *Ohring01920: Ohring / Crescent / gegossen / Anhänger / Kreuz* reporting such finds from the western part of the Avar Khaganate (Transdanubia), as well as some solitary occurrences from the northern fringes of the Carpathian Basin and the eastern Balkans. Stadler's *Ohring01920* is comparable to Variant B in Čilinska's system; such earrings have a very narrow, barely marked crescent and a three-ray pendant. Morphologically, Stadler's type *Ohring01940: Ohring / Crescent / gegossen / Anhänger / Stern* matches Čilinska's Variant C; it appeared in the western part of the Khaganate (Transdanubia) and on the northeastern, southeastern, and southern peripheries. Stadler's *Ohr-*

*ring01950: Ohring / Crescent / gegossen / Anhänger / Stern / MittelZipf* type resembles the earring variant without a pendant, as the rays protrude directly from the edge of the crescent. Related specimens are known from along the Danube, even northwest of the Danube Bend, the northern Tisza Region, occasionally the Lake Balaton area, and the eastern extremes of Transylvania. Type *Ohring03720: Ohring / Scheibe / Stern* appears in the western half of the Khaganate (in the area of the Danube Bend, Lake Balaton, and southeast of Lake Balaton), the northern Carpathian Basin (north of the Danube Bend and in the northern Tisza Region), and the easternmost part of Transylvania along the Mureş River. It matches Čilinska's Variant A, a typical representative of which is a pair of earrings from Čađavica. Type *Ohring03730: Ohring / Scheibe / Stern / durchbrochen* resembles the star-pendant earrings from the Mediterranean cultural circle. Related specimens appear, e.g., in pagan graves in the area of the then-future Early Croatian Principality (Petřinec 2009, 120–124); however, Stadler does not mention examples from the territory of the Khaganate (Stadler 2005, CD-ROM).

The most recent work about star-shaped earrings comes from Ioan Stanciu, who devoted his book to the early medieval settlement history of northwestern Romania, collecting such finds from the region. Interestingly, he mentions this earring type as the most frequent clothing accessory in the find material of the period there and believes that its fashion arrived there from the territory of the Khaganate. However, he also emphasises that these earrings were possibly not in fashion in all regions at the same time (Stanciu 2016, 227–233).

After this brief overview of research history and existing typologies, it must be pointed out that the goal of this paper was not to come up with another typology for the earrings in focus but to determine, by carefully analysing their material, mode of production, morphology, decoration, and archaeological context, three categories of production and products, which, thanks to their presence or absence on particular sites within a microregion, allow one to gain valuable insight into the social status and identity of the wearers and the reasons behind the type's increased popularity in some communities within the microregion. Evaluation relied on the most general or better, widely accepted classification by Čilinská (also, the one utilising the biggest set of finds, from the whole Carpathian Basin, amongst all typological systems); as this paper demonstrates,

there is little use of applying local and/or regional typologies developed for this jewellery type outside the focus area because the conclusions stemming from typological classification are not necessarily relevant or true in a different region.

It is now evident that the type of earrings with a star-shaped pendant originates from Byzantine goldsmith workshops or ones under Byzantine influence. The first variant, which appeared in the Martinovka cultural circle, was a luxurious one, a Byzantine-style creation by Pontic workshops. Later, the type spread through the network of communication routes known since the 5th century, appearing in the Danube Region (Čađavica, Coșovenii de Jos), where local workshops took over its production (Petrić 2009, 122–123, 128–129).

#### *Geographical position*

The easternmost lands of today's Croatia are part of the geographical region of Sirmia (Srijem), most part of which (Srem) is part of Serbia (Fig. 2). It is a plainland with dense forests and swamps and little elevation; the few higher (with a height difference up to 3.00 m) areas have usually been inhabited for long periods. It was part of Pannonia Secunda, a Roman province that was also densely inhabited during the Migration Period. In the Avar Period, this area was the south(western) periphery of the Avar Khaganate, especially in the 8th century, when several cemeteries were in use in these lands. Additionally, the fair number of stray finds from the period indicate a much higher site density than previously thought.

#### *Earrings from Western Sirmia*

Based on their material, the crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant from western Sirmia can be classified into two main categories: silver or copper alloy.

Silver alloy specimens include (Fig. 3):

1. Pair, Otok-Gradina/Mandekov vinograd, Grave 3D (Fig. 4. 1, Cat. 1)
  2. Pair, Šaregrad-Klopore, Grave 29 (Fig. 4. 2, Cat. 19)
  3. Pair, Šaregrad-Klopore, Grave 40 (Fig. 4. 3, Cat. 20)
  4. Earring fragment, Šaregrad-Klopore, Grave 5 (Fig. 4. 4, Cat. 18)
  5. Crescent part fragment, Ivankovo-Dren (Fig. 4. 5, Cat. 15)
  6. Crescent part fragment, Mirkovci-Malat (Fig. 4. 6, Cat. 16)
  7. Crescent part fragment, Sotin-Vrućak (Fig. 4. 7, Cat. 17)
  8. Pair of crescent earrings with a teardrop pendant, Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 204<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 4. 8, Cat. 7)
- The silver specimens can be divided into two groups based on pendant type:
1. Several have a genuine star-shaped pendant consisting of a central part and a hollow case soldered to the crescent, which is frequently closed with a tin back sheet and features granulated or pseudo-granulated rays. The evolution of their design, particularly of the crescent/hoop contact zone, can be followed to some extent through the finds of this group. The specimens range from ones where the contact point of the hoop and the crescent is simply wrapped around with a piece of wire (Fig. 4. 8, Privlaka, Grave 204) to ones where the area is formed as if it were covered with ornate tubular metal beads strung on the hoop (Fig. 4. 1, Otok, Grave 3D), and ones with a simple profiled version with terminal granules and single granule rows (Fig. 4. 2, Šaregrad, Grave 29), to a lavish cast specimen where the small discs covering the contact zone are actually a flat version of the flower-like centre of the star pendant part (Fig. 4. 3, Šaregrad, Grave 40). These specimens share a decoration scheme: the crescent is adorned with filigree patterns, the central part of the pendant with granulated or filigree petals, while its shape was completed by adding triangular, granulated 'rays' (Otok, Grave 3D, Šaregrad, Graves 5 and 29, and Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 204; Fig. 4. 1, 2, 4, 8). Cast specimens follow this scheme, too (e.g., the only cast silver example from Šaregrad, Grave 40 and several bronze specimens, like G52, Privlaka, Grave 52, Šaregrad, Grave 68, Vinkovci, Grave 1, which are discussed below). In terms of form and decoration concept, the specimens from Otok, Grave 3D and Šaregrad, Grave 29 (Fig. 4. 1–2), are unquestionably the closest.
  2. This variant lacks the central star-shaped pendant, and the rays protrude from the outer edge of the crescent. All specimens have a crescent part, which in one case is openwork (Fig. 4. 6, Mirkovci-Malat), while in another, a small granulated triangle protrudes from the edge at the middle of the inner side, turning it into two small arches (Fig. 4. 7, Sotin-Vrućak). Besides, the basics of the deco-





Fig. 7. Bronze star-pendant crescent hoop earrings from Western Syrmia. 1: Otok-Gradina, Grave 17 (A. Šmalcelj); 2: Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 22 (K. Rončević); 3: Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 52 (K. Rončević); 4: Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79 (K. Rončević); 5: Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 202 (M. Pjevac); 6: Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 5 (E. Balić); 7: Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 68 (E. Balić); 8: Vinkovci-68. BVP bb (E. Balić), Grave 1; 9: Ostrovo-Gorica (I. Sokola); 10: Markušica Čeretinci (I. Sokola); 11: Mirkovci Malat (I. Sokola); 12: Vinkovačko Novo Selo Mokro polje (I. Sokola); 13: Privlaka-Zakota (I. Sokola) (by Mirjana Pjevac and Anita Rapan Papeša)

7. kép. Bronzból öntött csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalók Nyugat-Szerémség területéről. 1: Otok-Gradina, 17. sír (A. Šmalcelj); 2: Privlaka-Gole njive, 22. sír (K. Rončević); 3: Privlaka-Gole njive, 52. sír (K. Rončević); 4: Privlaka-Gole njive, 79. sír (K. Rončević); 5: Privlaka-Gole njive, 202. sír (M. Pjevac); 6: Šarengrad-Klopore, 5. sír (E. Balić); 7: Šarengrad-Klopore, 68. sír (E. Balić); 8: Vinkovci-68. BVP bb (E. Balić), 1. sír; 9: Ostrovo-Gorica (I. Sokola); 10: Markušica Čeretinci (I. Sokola); 11: Mirkovci Malat (I. Sokola); 12: Vinkovačko Novo Selo Mokro polje (I. Sokola); 13: Privlaka-Zakota (I. Sokola) (készítette Mirjana Pjevac és Anita Rapan Papeša)

ration (granulation, braided filigree wires) are the same as in the previous group (*Fig. 6*).

All silver specimens with a completely formed crescent match Čilinska's Variant C, while the variant without a central pendant was classified as Type 4 by Teodor (Teodor 1995, 193–194). The only exception (without a crescent) is a silver Variant A earring fragment of the star-shaped pendant and some of the hoop from Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 5 (*Fig. 4. 4*) (Čilinska 1975, Abb. 1).

The bronze examples (*Fig. 7*) include:

1. Variant C earring fragment; Otok-Gradina, Grave 17 (*Fig. 7. 1*, Cat. 2)
2. Probably a pair of crescent earrings with traces of filigree decoration; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 22 (*Fig. 7. 2*, Cat. 3)
3. A pair of Variant C earrings; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 52 (*Fig. 7. 3*, Cat. 4)
4. A Variant B and a Variant C earring; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79 (*Fig. 7. 4*, Cat. 5)
5. A pair of Variant B earrings; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 202 (*Fig. 7. 5*, Cat. 6)
6. Variant C earring fragment: crescent part of the hoop with a star-shaped pendant; Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 5 (*Fig. 7. 6*, Cat. 10)
7. A pair of Variant C earrings; Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 68 (*Fig. 7. 7*, Cat. 9)
8. A pair of Variant C earrings; Vinkovci – 68. BVP bb, Grave 1 (*Fig. 7. 8*, Cat. 8)
9. Variant C earring fragment: crescent part with two directly attached rays and a central star-shaped pendant with three pseudo-granulated rays; Ostrovo-Gorica, stray find (*Fig. 7. 9*, Cat. 21)
10. Variant C earring fragment: crescent part with directly attached pseudo-granulated rays; Markušica Čeretinci, stray find (*Fig. 7. 10*, Cat. 11)
11. Variant C earring fragment: detail of the crescent part with directly attached pseudo-granulated rays; Mirkovci Malat, stray find (*Fig. 7. 11*, Cat. 12)
12. Variant C earring fragment: crescent part with directly attached pseudo-granulated rays; Vinkovačko Novo Selo Mokro polje, stray find (*Fig. 7. 12*, Cat. 13)
13. Variant C earring fragment: crescent part; stray find, Privlaka-Zakota (*Fig. 7. 13*, Cat. 14)

All bronze earrings listed above are cast and represent Čilinska's Variants B or C, save for the one from Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 22 (*Fig. 7. 2*), the crescent of which was cut from a bronze sheet and fastened to the hoop.

All three Variant B earrings were cast and are nearly identical (*Fig. 7. 4–5*). The crescent part of the hoop is barely widening, decorated by a single groove along the middle; the hoop and crescent contact zone is not emphasised at all, while the central part of the pendant is strongly convex, surrounded by three simple rays with barely worked pseudo-granulation. They came from a single location, Privlaka-Gole njive and likely a single workshop (and/or master), and were probably obtained by their wearers at the same time. The only difference between the earrings of the pair from Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 202 (*Fig. 7. 5*) is their dissimilar condition upon discovery – they had probably been exposed to diverse taphonomic processes or to the same ones but to a dissimilar extent.

A simple Variant C sub-variant (a piece from Otok-Gradina, Grave 17 [*Fig. 7. 1*], another from Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79 [*Fig. 7. 4*], and a stray find, an earring fragment from Ostrovo-Gorica [*Fig. 7. 9*]) has generally undecorated crescent surface (save for the piece from Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79, the crescent of which is adorned with a pair of opposite, curved triangles that follow the crescent shape, separated by a profiled edge), a profiled hoop-crescent contact, a star-shaped pendant with a small round bulge at the centre, and three rays with rough, hardly visible pseudo-granulation; the piece from Ostrovo-Gorica (*Fig. 7. 9*) also has a pair of small horizontal rays on the sides of the star-shaped pendant.

Two earrings of the more elaborate Variant C sub-variant (a pair from Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 52 [*Fig. 7. 3*], Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 68 [*Fig. 7. 7*], and Vinkovci, Grave 1 [*Fig. 7. 8*], respectively) have a crescent with a double-arc inner edge. The known examples are decorated differently: the pair from Privlaka (*Fig. 7. 3*) is adorned with a single row of pseudo-granules along the edge, while the Šarengrad piece has three 'parallel' ribs along the edges and the mid-line; the design of the hoop-crescent contact zone of the Privlaka earrings and the one from Vinkovci imitate coiled wire (*Fig. 7. 3, 8*), whereas this part appears as a distinct decorative element on the Šarengrad find (*Fig. 7. 7*); the star-shaped pendants of the Privlaka earrings have five pseudo-granulated rays of diverse length (*Fig. 7. 3*); the bulging central part of the Šarengrad earring is undecorated (*Fig. 7. 7*); the piece from Vinkovci is adorned with a four-ray star (of which only three have persisted); and the pendants of the Privlaka finds bear a pseudo-filigree six-petalled rosette each. Interestingly,





Fig. 8. Grave find assemblages. Otok-Gradina, Grave 3D; Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 29; Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 40  
 8. kép. Síregyüttesek. Otok-Gradina, 3D sír; Šarengrad-Klopore, 29. sír; Šarengrad-Klopore 40. sír

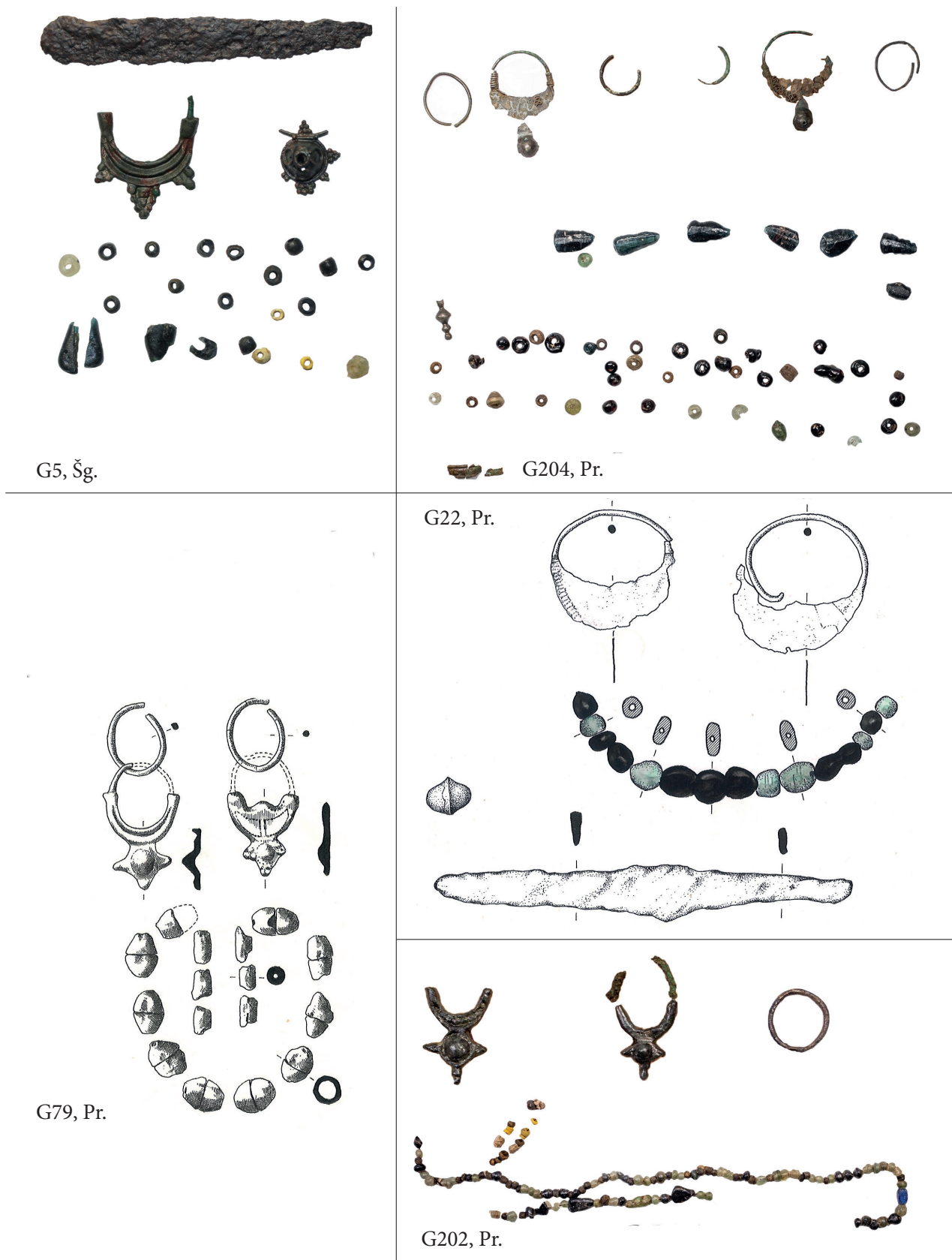


Fig. 9. Grave find assemblages. Šarengrad-Klopare, Grave 5; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 204; Otok-Gradina, Grave 17; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 22; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79; Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 202  
 9. kép. Síregyüttesek. Šarengrad-Klopare, 5. sír; Privlaka-Gole njive, 204. sír; Otok-Gradina, 17. sír; Privlaka-Gole njive, 22. sír; Privlaka-Gole njive, 79. sír; Privlaka-Gole njive, 202. sír

an almost identical analogy to the pair from Vinkovci is known from a cemetery in Prša, Slovakia (Točík 1963).

Earrings of Variant C, equal to Teodor's Type 4, have no star-shaped pendant; they come with diverse numbers of pseudo-granulated rays (Šarengrad-Klopare, Grave 5, Markušica-Čeretinci: three rays [Fig. 7. 6, 10]; Mirkovci-Malat, Vinkovačko Novo Selo Mokropolje, stray find: more than three rays [Fig. 7. 11, 12]). The decoration of the crescent part, including the profiled, incised lines along the edges, is similar on all specimens. The piece from Šarengrad-Klopare, Grave 5 (Fig. 7. 6), stands out for its relatively narrow crescent, which resembles the bronze earrings of Čilinska's Variant B in form and the execution of the decoration. Their appearance in a Late Avar Period cemetery (Šarengrad, Grave 5) corroborates the hypothesis that the related stray finds in this microregion also belong to the (Late) Avar Period: as mentioned above, such finds in the Carpathian Basin appear sporadically and always in areas close to rivers, primarily the Danube and the Tisza (Stadler 2005). Considering that they were well-known in the Lower Danube area, mainly that of today's Romania and Bulgaria (the finds from where Grigorov dated from the 8th up to the second half of the 9th century: Teodor 1995; Grigorov 2007, 35, Fig. 19. 156), the pendantless variants, akin to the 'classical' ones, seem to be a product of the Mediterranean/Byzantine cultural tradition.

The presence of this variant seems to confirm the existence of cultural and/or trade connections between the study area and regions located east and southeast of Sarmatia, including the territory of the former Byzantine provinces in the Balkans and, consequently, also the presence of the remains of a former or a still active Byzantine/Mediterranean influence in those regions. It must be noted here again that in Dalmatia, the neighbouring region with strong and active Byzantine cultural influence, pagan graves with star-shaped earrings without a central pendant, of the then-future Early Croatian culture, have been found; however, those specimens are slightly different and more elaborate, probably because they were made in Byzantine cities in the Adriatic (Petrinec 2009, 120–124). This analogy illustrates excellently how different levels of presence and influence of the culture of origin may affect the overall appearance of the final product.

The pieces from Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 22 (Fig. 7. 2), and a bronze crescent fragment, a stray find

from Privlaka-Zakota (Fig. 7. 13), could not be classified precisely. The latter is the double-arc part of a cast crescent, its edge lined with a pseudo-granule row accompanied by thin ribs, and round beading emphasising the crescent/hoop contact zone. However, the star-shaped pendant or rays, based on which the star-shaped variant could be classified, are missing.

Based on the specimens discovered thus far, all star-pendant earring variants, representing different stages in the development of the type, were clearly present in this microregion. They have been found in Avar Period cemeteries in Otok, Privlaka, Šarengrad, and Vinkovci; their absence from the cemetery in Stari Jankovci is not surprising as a significant part of the graves was destroyed, and another part of the site was not investigated at all. However, their absence from the cemetery in Nuštar (with 196 graves excavated) is surprising, as it was the burial place of a relatively wealthy community (Rapan Papeša 2012), especially compared to those at Privlaka and Stari Jankovci.

The presence of luxurious star-shaped earrings, bronze imitations, and highly simplified specimens most likely reflects three distinct levels of social status or purchasing power of the wearers: those who could afford high-quality examples in silver, those who wore imitations of those (the production of which certainly still required more effort from craftsmen than, for example, that of a simple hoop earring with one or a few glass beads [Čilinska's Variants IX and X]), the most common type in the Avar Period cemeteries of the microregion, Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b, 285–289), and those who had to be satisfied with the most basic star-shaped earring variants, which only imitated the shape of the more expensive types.

### *Chronology*

As it is well known, dating the first appearance of a jewellery type within the (Late) Avar Period is extremely difficult; today, the first appearance and use of certain jewellery types can be divided into two phases. The reason is that, unlike belt sets, jewellery was not linked with some kind of legal status, and the appearance of various types and variants cannot be specified within the range of a single generation (Szenthe 2021, 420). Although the change of jewellery types in the archaeological record undoubtedly reflects fashion choices, it also represents the taste of the wearers. Currently, our knowledge of the



Khaganate's economic conditions is insufficient to understand in detail to what extent the wearing style and design of certain jewellery types (aside from the most luxurious and most modest specimens) were determined by the wealth and social status of their owners (See *Catalogue*).

An additional factor complicating the analysis is that most specimens at hand are stray finds, especially the earrings without a central pendant of one single specimen which were discovered in a grave.

Bronze specimens in western Sarmia often appear in the graves with common bead types (black, pale green, and turquoise melon seed beads: Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 22, 202, 204 [Fig. 9], and 52 [Fig. 10], Šarengrad-Klopore, Graves 5 [Fig. 9] and 29 [Fig. 8]; black, transparent, pale green, brown, and yellow round and spherical beads: Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 22, 52, 202, 204 [Fig. 9], and 52 [Fig. 10], Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 5 [Fig. 9]), and also, to a lesser extent, with brown and black millet beads (Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 202 and 204 [Fig. 9], Šarengrad-Klopore, Graves 5 [Fig. 9] and 68 [Fig. 10]), tin beads (primarily biconical: Otok-Gradina, Grave 3D [Fig. 8], Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 22 and 79 [Fig. 8] with cylindrical ones in the latter; Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 40: biconical silver beads and two semi-precious stones; Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 68: biconical silver and two semi-precious stone beads [Fig. 10]), and one with a blue prismatic bead with bevelled ends (Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 202 [Fig. 9]) and a bipyramidal metal pendant (Otok-Gradina, Grave 3D [Fig. 8]), respectively. In one case, the wearer also had a twisted bronze torque (Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 52 [Fig. 10]), while in three cases, the star-pendant earrings were paired up with simple hoop earrings (in Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 202, the star-pendant earrings were hanging from a pair of simple bronze hoop earrings; in Grave 204, they were found with a pair of simple bronze hoop earrings and oval hoop earrings with a round black glass bead [Fig. 9]; in Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 68, with simple hoop earrings and two hoop earrings with a likely biconical pendant, only half of the pendant of which persisted (Fig. 10).<sup>2</sup> The other respective grave finds have little chronological value; these include knives (Otok-Gradina, Grave 3D [Fig. 8], Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 22 [Fig. 9], Šarengrad-Klopore, Graves 5 [Fig. 9], 29, and 40 [Fig. 8]), an iron buckle, a spindle-whorl, and a wooden bucket with iron fittings (Šarengrad-Klopore, Grave 40 [Fig. 8]), and food offerings (Otok-Gradina, Graves

3D and 17, Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 22 and 52, Šarengrad-Klopore, Graves 5, 29, and 40).

Aside from the earrings with a star-shaped pendant from Otok-Gradina Graves 3D and 17, and Privlaka-Gole njive Grave 79, the most common find in the graves is a mixed-bead necklace with primarily melon seed beads. The absence of beads typical of the Late Avar Period (black-brown cylindrical-oval, rod-shaped, so-called 'bulging', and millefiori beads), together with the presence of round, spherical, and millet beads, indicate an earlier dating for the related assemblages.

Beads, or rather, necklaces, very often provide decisive evidence on the chronological position of women's graves, but they are mostly very challenging to date. Chronologically, the most sensitive bead types are ones from the Early and Middle Avar Periods (Pásztor 2008). Moreover, beads were typically made locally, and there are often regional (or even local) variations in the length of their use. Additionally, there is no strict or obvious chronological limit to the wearing of beads (Pásztor 2008, 307). Some remained in use over numerous generations, and it was typical to wear a 'mixed' necklace strung of several kinds of beads; in these cases, logically, the youngest specimens have the highest dating value (Garam 1995, 290). In the analysed record, the early phase of the Late Avar Period is characterised by early mixed-bead necklaces in Privlaka and Stari Jankovci, respectively; these comprise, besides a small number of melon seed beads, spherical, millet, and cylindrical beads. Mostly transparent, translucent, or (sea) green melon seed beads (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b, 206) have been found in Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 52 (Fig. 10), 202, and 204 (Fig. 9), while Grave 79 (Fig. 9) contained earrings and a necklace made of metal beads, a type associated with the period of early 'mixed' necklaces on the site. Grave 22 (Fig. 7. 2) on the same site is the youngest burial with crescent hoop earrings; the assemblage also contains a 'mixed' necklace consisting mainly of melon seed beads.<sup>3</sup> The relative position of this grave within the cemetery corroborates its relatively young dating: it was located near Grave 47 (dated to the second half of the 8th century) and Grave A (end of the 8th century). In summary, while the artefacts in its assemblage reflect an earlier period, the burial should be dated to the second half of the eighth century.

Otok, Grave 3D, with a pair of silver earrings, is also likely one of the youngest burials (Fig. 4. 1). While Grave 17, the other grave on the site to con-

tain an earring with a star-shaped pendant (*Fig. 7. 1*), included no other artefacts and, thus, could not be dated more precisely than the 8th century (based on horizontal stratigraphy, i.e. its relative position within the site), Grave 3D also contained a bipyramidal pendant strung into a necklace of biconical tin beads (*Fig. 8*). The closest analogy to this pendant comes from the neighbouring Grave 2D, where it appeared strung on a fairly long mixed glass bead necklace, together with an earring with a cast bronze ovoid pendant, a type associated with the youngest Late Avar or post-Avar grave horizon (Garam 1995, 284). Based on that and its relative position within the cemetery (between Grave 2D and Grave 13, which held the youngest belt set on site) (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b, 347), Grave 3D could be dated to the final decades of the 8th century.

Based on the find context, earrings with a star-shaped pendant (particularly the bronze variants) were the most popular in the first half of the Late Avar Period (as confirmed to some extent by Grave 22 [*Fig. 7. 2*]), whereas the wearing of luxurious, finely crafted silver examples was not so limited in time, also extending to the late 8th century (especially the ones in Otok, Grave 3D [*Fig. 4. 1*]).

Šarengrad, Grave 5 is significant because of the finds in its assemblage. It is the only known grave to contain a Variant A earring (*Fig. 4. 4*), connecting the Variant A earrings from Čadavica with the pair of Variant C earrings (with filigree petals on the central part of the pendant) from Otok, Grave 3D (*Fig. 4. 1*). The other bronze earring in the Šarengrad grave represents the variant with a full crescent and triangular rays protruding directly from its edge, but without a central pendant (*Fig. 7. 6*). The burial could be dated to the early 8th century based on the beads discovered in the neck area, which also means that crescent earrings with rays but without a star-shaped pendant were present there earlier than previously suggested by Teodor (Teodor 1995, 194) (at the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries), which corroborates the dating estimated by Grigorov (Grigorov 2007, 35). In conclusion, the style analysis of star-shaped earrings from Western Syrmia has revealed that most but certainly not all can be dated to the early 8th century and that several variants, including the one without the central pendant, appeared at the same time, while one of the grave assemblages with such an earring likely contains a relic of a slightly earlier period, a Type A earring from the second half or the end of the 7th century.

In the case of Grave 22 (*Fig. 7. 1*), the feature itself is relatively young, but the costumes and equipment of the deceased reflect the material culture of an earlier period. Perhaps the slightly unusual metal sheet cutting technique was applied because the earring was ordered when bronze specimens were no longer as common as before, and the craftsman had to improvise or was unfamiliar with the production technique.

#### *The wearers*

Based on available data, earrings with a star-shaped pendant in the western Syrmia microregion represent a distinct type group appearing mainly in the 8th century, especially its early decades, when most known bronze examples of Variants A, B, and C were made. However, the luxurious (in the context of the microregion; in general, perhaps slightly expensive) version remained in fashion throughout the century, and some specimens (Otok, Grave 3D [*Fig. 4. 1*]) can even be dated to the late 8th century. All variants are present in relatively significant numbers in western Syrmia: altogether, eleven graves with earrings with a star-shaped pendant in their assemblages are known from three sites with 328 graves in total (in contrast to Tiszafüred, where such jewellery was recovered from 24 of the 1,282 graves, Garam 1995, 158). These earrings were not the most popular and common choices of 8th-century Avars (the flagship type of the Late Avar earring fashion was certainly hoop earrings with a glass bead). At the same time, obtaining such jewellery required a higher purchasing power or bigger wealth than common earring types – especially the luxurious or silver variants and the elaborate bronze Variant C specimens. There is no owner of a crescent-star-shaped earring in the known burials to have belonged amongst the poorest members of their respective communities. Based on its scatter, this jewellery type was in fashion especially in western Syrmia, as evidenced by the presence of various types and variants, both in silver and bronze, and the different production techniques (pressblech, mould casting, and perhaps lost wax casting). The fact that the diverse variants appear together in burials (Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79, and Šarengrad-Klopare, Grave 5 [*Fig. 9*]) and their similarity, including the continuity of the way of decoration in all variants (filigree, granulation, pseudo filigree, and pseudo granulation), indicate that the related workshop must have been close to

the distribution network, or better, that it was part of the distribution network of this microregion. However, the workshops in the hinterland of the Danube *limes* were active during the Late Imperial Period, while in the 5th century, they adapted to the taste of the newly arriving barbarians and seemingly still remained in operation at the start of the 6th century (Vinski 1971, 51; Vinski 1986, 148). The studied microregion lies relatively close to Keszthely and Pécs, two well-known Romanised/Late Antique centres in the Early Avar Period (Kardaras 2018, 103–104). Recently, theories have emerged that the southeastern periphery of the Khaganate, i.e. the border zone of the former Byzantine provinces in the Balkans, served as a communication corridor between the Khaganate and Byzantium (Kardaras 2018, 139–150) already in the second half of the 7th century (based on a well-known find from Čađavica, Demo 2014, 56–57) and a century later still (based on a coin hoard of Abbasid denars from Donji Petrovci, Bassianae, Bugarski 2022). Thus, one has to reckon with the possibility that certain Late Antique traditions (related to, e.g., goldsmithing) were passed down through generations in this area and that the influence of Byzantine ‘fashion’, or rather, material culture, might have been stronger in the possible communication corridor.

It must be highlighted again that previous research pointed to the Balkans – the area of the former Byzantine provinces, and more specifically, the Pontic Region and the Martinovka cultural circle – where the first star-shaped earrings were produced (such jewellery appeared in Central Europe much later). Thus, western Sarmatia, based on its geographical position and history, was a natural bridge between the territories of Pannonia (of which it is part) and the Pontic Region.

There is also the question of how those earrings were worn in this microregion. They appear together with other earrings in several graves (Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 79, 202, and 204 [Fig. 9] and Šarengrad-Klopare, Grave 68 [Fig. 10]) and were certainly worn, hung from simple bronze hoops, as temple rings in at least one case (Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79 [Fig. 9]). In Grave 202 of the same site (Fig. 9), the crescent hoop earrings with a star pendant were found on one side of the skull and the earring with a conical pendant (perished since) on the other. In Grave 204 (Fig. 9), a crescent hoop earring with a teardrop or star-shaped pendant, a simple oval hoop earring, and a round hoop earring with a glass bead

were found on one side of the skull and two simple round hoop earrings on the other. A pair of crescent hoop earrings with a star pendant was discovered in Šarengrad, Grave 68 (Fig. 10), alongside a pair of damaged earrings with a large, hollow, biconical pendant and a pair of simple bronze hoop earrings. So, especially in Privlaka, such earrings tend to appear alongside other, simpler types (primarily the most simple type, hoop earrings).

Anton Distelberger presented a sociological interpretation of the phenomenon where several earrings, representing different types, appear together in Avar Period women’s grave assemblages in Austria and noted that the phenomenon is limited primarily to the transition from the Middle to the Late Avar Period and the end of the Avar Period, respectively. He explained it by hoarding (that is, the mourners completed the funerary costume of the deceased with multiple earrings that she had received or acquired at various points during her life); this is especially conspicuous in the case of the graves that contain a pair of precious metal earrings (Distelberger 2004, 30–58). However, as for our microregion, the problem should be approached with extreme caution due to several reasons:

- 1) not all graves with multiple earrings, including earring variants with a star-shaped pendant, can be assigned unambiguously to the horizons mentioned by Distelberger, and they most definitely do not belong to the latest horizons of their respective cemeteries;
- 2) even the most simple earring variants with a star-shaped pendant may appear together with other types of earrings (Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 79 and 202 [Fig. 9], Šarengrad, Grave 68 [Fig. 10]);
- 3) their design is optimised to be viewed from the side, indicating that at least some were intended to be temple rings;
- 4) the crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant in Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 79, were hung on small hoop earrings, indicating they were worn as temple rings (Fig. 9);
- 5) the mortuary costumes of many women in Privlaka-Gole njive include more than one pair of earrings, added not necessarily for decorative purposes, as hinted by their relative positions in the grave (at other parts of the body, e.g., in Grave 104, close to the hands and the lower legs); however, graves with a crescent hoop earring with a star-shaped pendant never display this arrangement. In the case of Grave 202 of the same site





Fig. 10. Grave find assemblages. Privlaka-Gole njive, Grave 52; Šaregrad-Klopare, Grave 68  
10. kép. Síregyüttesek. Privlaka-Gole, njive 52. sír; Šaregrad-Klopare, 68. sír

(Fig. 9), the arrangement of the earrings – the crescent hoop earrings on one side of the skull and the other types on the other – indicates that they were grave goods rather than accessories to the funerary costume. This arrangement does not recur in any of the other studied graves.

Perhaps the women buried in these graves obtained different types of earrings at different stages of their lives; however, it cannot be excluded that they wore all of them simultaneously.

The most intriguing question, however, is the wearer's choice of these earrings because crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant do not appear on some sites in western Syrmia. Such earrings have been found in Vinkovci, Privlaka, Šaregrad, and Otok, but they are absent from the records of Stari Jankovci and Nuštar, despite their similar chronological position. Although Stari Jankovci was

disturbed significantly, based on horizontal stratigraphy and that some finds in private collections can be assigned to the younger grave horizons (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b, 258–261), mainly the younger part of the cemetery seems to have been affected by destruction. But site disturbance alone does not account for the lack of such earrings as the type is also missing from Nuštar, where 196 8th- and early 9th-century graves were investigated (Rapan Papeša 2022, 89, 91), the cemetery was barely disturbed, and, according to excavation leader Anita Rapan Papeša, the mortuary community was rather well-off (Rapan Papeša 2024), compared especially to their neighbours (in Otok, Privlaka, and Stari Jankovci). Conclusively, choosing these earrings could primarily be related to the taste of the wearers in the related communities, whose members opted for these variants consciously, albeit other types of

typical Late Avar Period jewellery (hoop earrings with glass beads) and other earring types associated with the Mediterranean/Byzantine cultural circle (hoop earrings with an oblong grape bunch pendant, Privlaka-Gole njive, Graves 214, 219, 225) (Šmalcelj Novaković 2020) were also available to them. That is especially interesting because of the presence of cremation graves in western Syrmia (Vinkovci-Duga ulica, Grave 99; Sekelj Ivančan, Tkalčec 2006; Šarengrad-Klopare, Rimpf et al. 2020, 12), which at least partially overlap with the Avar Period inhumation cemeteries there (end of the 7th or first half of the 8th century for both Vinkovci-Duga ulica and Šarengrad-Klopare). They likely indicate communities with different identities coexisting in this border region of the Khaganate, as evidenced by the different burial customs (inhumation versus cremation) and jewellery choices. In summary, the wearers of the crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant were more affluent, had a higher status, a different social role, or different preferences than those in Nuštar.

One cannot tell today whether the appearance of the crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant in western Syrmia simply reflects the preferences of some people of a certain identity in these areas, who took advantage of the availability of such earrings in this (micro)region, or this jewellery type is an identity marker of some affluent members of the respective communities, who choose these earrings partly because their form originates in Late Antique traditions and, as such, were also known in their previous cultural networks ('the Pontic link'). Neither can it be decided whether the presence of these earrings emphasised the different identities of the wearers (from the local cultural majority, who opted for typical Late Avar earrings instead). In order to reach more conclusions, one must first understand the current state of research and learn about the occurrence of this earring type in the Avar Period sites in eastern Syrmia. Hopefully, a comprehensive overview of the findings in that area will also be published in the near future.

*Appendix: Catalogue of crescent hoop earrings with a star-shaped pendant*

If the star-shaped earrings were in a grave with other finds, those will be listed and illustration of the inventory of the grave provided; if specimens are only found in a grave (or, in case of Grave 17, Otok, only

found along with an animal bone) this will be stated in the catalogue and there will be no additional illustration.

If the earring is described as damaged, it usually means there is no link: if the damage is greater, the find is described as a fragment.

*Cat. 1 (Fig. 4. 1, Fig. 8)*

Site: Otok  
 Context: Grave 3D  
 Orientation: (N)W-(S)E  
 Sex: female  
 Number, condition, material: pair, one intact, one damaged, silver  
 Technique: pressblech, filigree  
 Structure: two-part  
 Crescent part: simple full crescent  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: oval, fine edges and a single row of granules on both sides  
 Pendant: convex central part with two triangular rays of granules (some missing)  
 Crescent decoration: crescent trimmed with a single – braided double – single filigree wire pattern  
 Pendant decoration: flower motif with a circular filigree ribbon on top and 4 filigree wire petals  
 Hoop: round  
 Hoop profile: round  
 Variant by Čilinska: C  
 Other finds in the grave: 5 silver, sheet metal, pressblech biconical beads, a cast bronze bipyramidal pendant, an iron knife, and a mammal's thighbone

*Cat. 2 (Fig. 7. 1)*

Site: Otok  
 Context: Grave 17D  
 Orientation: W-E  
 Sex: female?  
 Number, condition, material: one, damaged, bronze  
 Technique: cast  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent part: full crescent with a dual inner arc  
 Hoop/Crescent contact design: small spherical joints  
 Pendant: convex central part with three triangular rays of pseudo-granules  
 Crescent decoration: single row pseudo-granulation along the edges  
 Pendant decoration: triangular rays of pseudo-

granules  
 Hoop: none  
 Hoop profile: none  
 Variant by Čilinska: C  
 Other finds in the grave: bone of an unidentified animal

*Cat. 3* (Fig. 7. 2, Fig. 9)

Site: Privlaka  
 Context: Grave 22  
 Orientation: SE-NW  
 Sex: female  
 Number, condition, material: pair, one damaged, one perished during excavation, bronze  
 Technique: cut sheet metal, soldering, filigree? (possible traces)  
 Structure: two-part  
 Crescent part: simple full crescent  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: simple  
 Pendant: none/missing (biconical bead?)  
 Crescent decoration: trace of filigree decoration on the right lower edge? (drawing, record)  
 Pendant decoration: none/missing  
 Hoop: elongated  
 Hoop profile: round  
 Variant by Čilinska: C  
 Other finds in grave: a bronze sheet metal biconical bead, three light green and six black melon seed beads, three light green and two black round glass beads, an iron knife, a bone of an unidentified animal

*Cat. 4* (Fig. 7. 3, Fig. 10)

Site: Privlaka  
 Context: Grave 52  
 Orientation: SE-NW  
 Sex: female  
 Number, condition material: pair, complete, bronze  
 Technique: casting  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent part: full crescent with a dual inner arc  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: rough imitation of three turns of wrapped wire  
 Pendant: convex central part with five triangular rays of pseudo-granules  
 Crescent decoration: single row of pseudo-granulation along the edge  
 Pendant decoration: convex part in the form of a six-petalled flower with a pseudo-granule in the middle and five triangular rays of pseudo-granules

Hoop: round  
 Hoop profile: round  
 Variant by Čilinska: C  
 Other finds in grave: a turquoise, two light green and a brown melon seed beads, four light green and three light brown cylindrical glass beads, three light green, seven black, two yellow, five green round glass beads, two light green and two light brown spherical glass beads a cast (?) bronze braided wire torc, a silver finger ring, a grey pottery vessel (lost)

*Cat. 5* (Fig. 7. 4, Fig. 9)

Site: Privlaka  
 Context: Grave 79  
 Orientation: SE-NW  
 Sex: child  
 Number, condition, material: two earrings of different variants, damaged, bronze  
 Technique: casting  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent part: 1: slightly widening lower arc, 2: full crescent with a dual inner arc  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: slightly bulging?  
 Pendant: convex, round central part with triangular rays  
 Crescent decoration: 1: groove along the crescent, 2: grooved, opposite arched triangles  
 Pendant decoration: none  
 Hoop: 1: round, 2: none  
 Hoop profile: 1: round, 2: none  
 Variant by Čilinska: 1: B, 2: C  
 Other finds in grave: two simple oval bronze earrings, six cylindrical and ten biconical pressed tin or lead beads

*Cat. 6* (Fig. 7. 5, Fig. 9)

Site: Privlaka  
 Context: Grave 202  
 Orientation: SE-NW  
 Sex: child  
 Number, condition, material: pair, damaged, bronze  
 Technique: casting  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent part: slight widening lower arc  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: slightly bulging?  
 Pendant: convex, round central part with three triangular rays  
 Crescent decoration: 1: groove along the wider lower part, 2: none

Pendant decoration: central part surrounded by a groove, bottom ray made of two pseudo-granules (?)

Hoop: oval

Hoop profile: no data

Variant by Čilinska: B

Other finds in grave: a conical pendant earring (lost), seven black and three pale green melon seed beads; 16 black, 27 transparent, 12 blue-green round glass beads, 26 black and eleven yellow millet beads, a blue prismatic bead, a bronze finger ring

*Cat. 7* (Fig. 4. 8, Fig. 9)

Site: Privlaka

Context: Grave 204

Orientation: SE-NW

Sex: female

Number, condition, material: pair, damaged, silver

Technique: pressblech?, filigree

Structure: two-part

Crescent part: simple full crescent

Hoop/crescent contact design: joints made of coiled wire

Pendant: convex central part, slightly tear-shaped

Crescent decoration: looping serpentine filigree line along the lower edge

Pendant decoration: none

Hoop: round

Hoop profile: round

Variant by Čilinska: C

Other finds in grave: two bronze simple round hoop earrings, a simple oval hoop earring, an oval earring with a glass bead, a black, a pale green, two opaque and seven turquoise melon seed beads, a brown cylindrical glass bead, ten black, four transparent, three pale green round glass mass beads, ten black spherical glass mass beads, nine brown millet beads, a finger ring (lost), an iron ring (lost)

*Cat. 8* (Fig. 7. 8)

Site: Vinkovci-68. BVP bb

Context: Grave 1

Orientation: E-W

Sex: child

Number, condition, material: pair, complete, bronze

Technique: casting

Structure: cast-in-one

Crescent part: simple full crescent

Hoop/crescent contact design: joints made of coiled wire (imitation?)

Pendant: convex central part with five triangular rays of pseudo-granules

Crescent decoration: a single line along the edge and a horizontal S-scroll in the middle

Pendant decoration: central bulge with three pseudo-filigree petals on the central convex part and five triangular rays of pseudo-granules

Hoop: round, slightly tapered ends at the middle of the upper arc

Hoop profile: round

Variant by Čilinska: C

Other finds in grave: none

*Cat. 9* (Fig. 7. 7, Fig. 10)

Site: Šarengrad

Context: Grave 68

Orientation: NW-SE

Sex: female

Number, condition, material: pair, damaged, bronze

Technique: casting

Structure: cast-in-one

Crescent part: full crescent with a dual inner arc

Hoop/crescent contact design: large oval bead imitation

Pendant: convex central part with triangular rays of pseudo-granules

Crescent decoration: three parallel ridges along the edges and in the middle; the inner arc is divided in two by a cluster of pseudo-granules

Pendant decoration: none

Hoop: missing

Hoop profile: missing

Variant by Čilinska: C

Other finds in grave: two simple oval bronze hoop earrings with straight-cut, flat ends, two bronze earrings with hollow biconical pendant, three biconical silver sheet beads, a blue and a transparent spherical glass bead, nine black opaque and a yellow opaque millet bead

*Cat. 10* (Fig. 7. 6)

Site: Šarengrad

Context: Grave 5

Orientation: E-W

Sex: female

Number, condition, material: one, damaged, bronze

Technique: casting

Structure: one-piece  
 Crescent part: crescent  
 Hoop/Crescent contact design: oval 'bead'  
 Pendant: three triangular rays of pseudo-granules directly attached to crescent  
 Crescent decoration: three parallel ridges along the edges and in the middle  
 Pendant decoration: no central appendage, triangular rays of pseudo-granules  
 Hoop: missing  
 Hoop profile: missing  
 Variant by Čilinska: C  
 Other finds in grave: a blue and two translucent melon seed beads, a transparent, round glass bead, a transparent, spherical glass bead, twelve black opaque and three yellow opaque millet beads, two iron knives, a mammal thighbone

*Cat. 11* (Fig. 7. 10)

Site: Markušica-Čeretinci  
 Context: stray find  
 Sex: –  
 Number, condition, material: one, damaged, bronze  
 Technique: casting  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent part: simple full crescent  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: oval (?) bulge at the tips of the crescent  
 Pendant: no central pendant, three triangular rays of pseudo-granules  
 Crescent decoration: double ridge along the inner, single along the outer edge  
 Pendant decoration: no pendant  
 Hoop: missing  
 Hoop profile: missing  
 Variant by Čilinska: C

*Cat. 12* (Fig. 7. 11)

Site: Mirkovci-Malat  
 Context: stray find  
 Sex: –  
 Number, condition, material: one, crescent fragment, bronze  
 Technique: casting  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent: crescent  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: simple  
 Pendant: four triangular rays of pseudo-granules directly attached to crescent (a fifth is missing)  
 Crescent decoration: double ridge along the out-

er, a thick single one along the inner edge  
 Pendant decoration: none  
 Hoop: missing  
 Hoop profile: missing  
 Variant by Čilinska: C

*Cat. 13* (Fig. 7. 12)

Site: Vinkovačko Novo selo-Mokro polje  
 Context: stray find  
 Sex: –  
 Number, condition, material: one, crescent fragment, bronze  
 Technique of production: casting  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent part: crescent  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: simple  
 Pendant: five triangular rays of pseudo-granulation directly attached to the crescent  
 Crescent decoration: double ridge along the outer, a thick single one along the inner edge  
 Pendant decoration: no pendant  
 Hoop: missing  
 Hoop profile: missing  
 Variant by Čilinska: C

*Cat. 14* (Fig. 7. 13)

Site: Privilaka-Zakota  
 Context: stray find  
 Sex: –  
 Number, condition, material: one, crescent fragment, bronze  
 Technique of production: casting  
 Structure: cast-in-one  
 Crescent part: full crescent with a dual inner arc  
 Hoop/crescent contact design: two pseudo-granules (one side os missing)  
 Pendant: three triangular rays of pseudo-granules directly attached to the crescent  
 Crescent decoration: two pseudo-granulated lines along the edge, the joining of the inner arcs is enhanced by a pseudo-granulated triangle  
 Pendant decoration: no pendant  
 Hoop: missing  
 Hoop profile: missing  
 Variant by Čilinska: C

*Cat. 15* (Fig. 4. 5)

Site: Ivankovo-Dren  
 Context: stray find  
 Sex: –  
 Number, condition, material: one, crescent frag-



ment, silver

Technique: casting

Structure: cast-in-one

Crescent part: full crescent

Hoop/crescent contact design: two pseudo-granules on one side (the other is missing)

Pendant: two triangular rays of pseudo-granules directly attached to the crescent (the rest are missing)

Crescent decoration: braided pseudo-filigree band along the edges, completed by a single pseudo-filigree line inside

Pendant decoration: no pendant

Hoop: missing

Hoop profile: missing

Variant by Čilinska: C

*Cat. 16* (Fig. 4. 6)

Site: Mirkovci-Malat

Context: stray find

Sex: –

Number, condition, material: one, damaged, silver

Technique: casting

Structure: cast-in-one

Crescent part: simple openwork crescent

Hoop/crescent contact design: emphasised by separate pseudo-granules?

Pendant: five triangular rays of pseudo-granules directly attached to the crescent

Crescent decoration: inside of the crescent is open, separated in two by a central divider; the divider and the edges are decorated by a double row of pseudo-granules

Pendant decoration: no pendant

Hoop: missing

Hoop profile: missing

Variant by Čilinska: C

*Cat. 17* (Fig. 4. 7)

Site: Sotin-Vrućak

Context: stray find

Sex: –

Number, condition, material: one, damaged, silver

Technique: pressblech or repoussé?, filigree

Structure: one-piece

Crescent part: full crescent with a dual inner arc

Hoop/crescent contact design: emphasised by separate pseudo-granules (?)

Pendant: five triangular rays of pseudo-granules

(?) directly attached to the crescent

Crescent decoration: double row of pseudo-granules along the edge of the crescent and on the vertical divider in the middle

Pendant decoration: (triangular rays of) pseudo-granulation?

Hoop: missing

Hoop profile: missing

Variant by Čilinska: C

*Cat. 18* (Fig. 4. 4)

Site: Šarengrad

Context: Grave 5

Orientation: W-E

Sex: female

Number, condition, material: one, damaged, silver

Technique: pressblech or repoussé(?), granulation

Structure: one-piece

Crescent part: simple hoop

Hoop/crescent contact design: missing

Pendant: convex central part with five larger and smaller triangular rays (one missing) and a sixth inside the hoop

Crescent decoration: no crescent

Pendant decoration: flower motif with a circular (filigree?) ribbon on top and three petals made of filigree (?) wire

Hoop: ? (fragment)

Hoop profile: round?

Variant by Čilinska: A

Other finds in the grave: a blue and two translucent melon seed beads, a transparent round glass bead, a transparent spherical glass bead, twelve black opaque and three yellow opaque millet beads, two iron knives, a mammal thighbone

*Cat. 19* (Fig. 4. 2, Fig. 8)

Site: Šarengrad

Context: Grave 29

Orientation: NW-SE

Sex: female

Number, condition, material: pair, complete, silver

Technique: pressblech or repoussé?, granulation, filigree

Structure: two-part?

Crescent part: simple full crescent

Hoop/crescent contact design: large oval 'bead' between single rows of granules

Pendant: convex central part with five triangular



rays of granules

Crescent decoration: single row of granulation and braided filigree line along the edges, three alternating granulation triangles in the centre (very similar to Cat. 1)

Pendant decoration: convex central part with a large granule on top, surrounded by two rows of granules and three three-granule clusters; the edge of the central part is lined with a row of granulation, from which three larger granulation clusters point to the top; with five granulated rays

Hoop: round

Hoop profile: round?

Variant by Čilinska: C

Other finds in grave: fragments of at least two lead beads, two iron knives, and a bird bone

*Cat. 20* (Fig. 4. 3, Fig. 8)

Site: Šarengrad

Context: Grave 40

Orientation: NW-SE

Sex: female

Number, condition, material: pair, complete, silver

Technique: casting (lost wax method?)

Structure: cast-in-one

Crescent part: full crescent with a dual inner arc

Hoop/crescent contact design: round, flat disc with a pseudo-granule flower

Pendant: convex central part with five triangular rays of pseudo-granules

Crescent decoration: single row of pseudo-granules along the edges, convex centre; the joining of the inner arcs is enhanced by a pseudo-granulated triangle

Pendant decoration: convex central part with a

large pseudo-granule at the top, surrounded by six fluted petals that fill the surface of the pendant; with triangular rays of pseudo-granules

Hoop: round

Hoop profile: round

Variant by Čilinska: C

Other finds in grave: two silver sheet biconical beads with filigree decoration, a blue, a green, two transparent and two semi-transparent melon seed beads, a square semiprecious stone bead with truncated corners, a cylindrical amber bead, two iron knives, a buckle, a grey pottery vessel, a spindle-whorl, wooden bucket fittings, and a mammal thighbone

*Cat. 21* (Fig. 7. 9)

Site: Ostrovo-Gorica

Context: stray find

Sex: –

Number, condition, material: one, damaged, bronze

Technique of production: casting

Structure: one-piece

Crescent part: full crescent with a dual inner arc

Hoop/crescent contact design: slightly accentuated

Pendant: convex central part with three triangular rays of pseudo-granules; two small triangular rays of pseudo-granules directly attached to the crescent

Crescent decoration: ridge along the edge of the crescent

Pendant decoration: no pendant

Hoop: missing

Hoop profile: missing

Variant by Čilinska: C

*Notes*

- 1 To some extent, the exception is a pair of earrings from G204, Privlaka-Gole njive. Due to the severely damaged condition of the finds at the time of discovery, it is impossible to tell whether they had teardrop-shaped or star-shaped pendants. Nevertheless, the similarity of the form and the use of filigree wire in the decoration suggest that they came from the same workshop as the other examples.
- 2 The finds from Grave 202 confirm, and those from Grave 204 strongly suggest, that these pendants were worn on the temple, which was expected from their design, as the decorative part is best seen from the side.
- 3 Pure melon seed bead necklaces and those comprising mostly melon seed beads on this site were dated quite precisely. Based on accompanying finds, their use overlaps with early and late mixed necklaces. They could generally be dated to the first two-thirds of the 8th century (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b, 207).
- 4 This paper was written as part of the project 'Life on the Roman road: communications, trade and identities on Roman roads in Croatia from 1st–8th CE' (UIP-05-2017-9768), 2018–2023, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation and implemented at the Institute of Archaeology (leader: Ivana Ožanić Roguljić).

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CSILLAGOK, CSILLAGOK... CSILLAG ALAKÚ CSÜNGŐVEL ELLÁTOTT  
FÜLBEVALÓK MINT AZ IDENTITÁS ÉS A TÁRSADALMI HELYZET MARKEREI  
AZ AVAR KAGANÁTUS DÉLNYUGATI PEREMVIDÉKÉN

*Összefoglalás*

A csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalók (*zvjezdolike*, *Ohringe mit Sternzier*, *Ohringe mit Sternverzierung*) az avar anyagi kultúra egy ritka típusát képviselik, melyre a kutatás különös figyelmet fordít. A horvátországi avar kutatás a közelmúltban jelentős előrelépést ért el a leletcsoport értékelésében, elsősorban a korábbi kutatási eredmények újraértékelése, illetve számos új lelőhely felfedezése révén, melyek elsősorban az ország keleti területein, különösen a keleti régióban, a Nyugat-Szerémségben koncentrálódnak. Az e területen ismételtelen fellendülő, intenzív kutatás eredményeképp számos,

igen változatos típusokat képviselő fülbevaló került elő, melyek nem csupán kialakításukban és díszítésükben, de az anyagválasztás és az alkalmazott technológia tekintetében is eltérnek egymástól. Jelen tanulmány a csillag alakú csüngővel ellátott karikafülbevalók egyszerű és sarlós változatainak tipológiai elemzésén keresztül azok lehetséges státusz- és identitásjelző szerepét, illetve a 8. századi divat kapcsolódó trendjeit vizsgálja.

A tárgyalt fülbevalótípusok első tipológiai rendszerét Zdenko Vinski dolgozta ki, megállapítva, hogy az egyes változatok nem csupán eltérő

műhelyekhez, de különféle kulturális körökhöz is (bizánci-mediterrán, pannóniai-dunai és pontusi jellegű) kapcsolhatók. A leletcsoport első jelentős összefoglalását Fettich Nándor adta közre, aki e fülbevalókat a kutrigur anyagi kultúrához kötötte. Néhány későbbi leletközlést követően jelent meg a Közép-Európa területéről származó 7–8. századi avar női ékszerleletek egyetlen átfogó áttekintése Zlata Čilinská tollából (1975), aki a csillagalakú csüngővel ellátott karikafülbevalókat három csoportba sorolta: az A variáns darabjain a karika egyszerű drót, a B változatnál a karika alsó része megvastagszik, míg a C változat példányainál holdsarló alakú. Čilinská a három változat kifutását a 7. század közepére és végére, illetve a 8. század végére keltezte. Később Dan Gh. Teodor négy változatot különített el, jórészt romániai leletek alapján, illetve Garam Éva is négy típusba sorolta a tiszafüredi temetőből előkerült példányokat. Garam e fülbevalókat az avar női viselet részének vélte, míg a horvát kutatók ellenkező állásponton voltak az etnikai azonosítást illetően.

Bizonyos, hogy a típus bizánci vagy bizánci hatás alatt álló pontusi műhelyekben alakult ki; a legkorábbi (luxuskivitelű) példányok a Martinovka-körben tűnnek fel. Később a típus elterjedt a Duna-vidéken is, gyengébb minőségű bronz és ezüst változatait a helyi műhelyek is gyártani kezdték.

A bemutatott 12 ezüstövzetből és 19 bronzból öntött fülbevaló összesen 12 nyugat-szerémségi lelőhelyről származik; egy példányt kivéve mind Čilinská B és C variánsait képviselik. A C variáns jelenléte a terület keleti és délkeleti kereskedelmi és/vagy kulturális kapcsolatait, illetve az e régiókban továbbra is jelen lévő bizánci-mediterrán hatás bizonyítéka. A luxuskivitelű, a bronzból öntött és az igen egyszerű példányok együttes jelenléte valószínűleg három különböző társadalmi helyzetű vagy vásárlóerejű réteget jelez.

A Szerémség nyugati területén előkerült fülbevalók kontextus- és stíloselemzése alapján nem minden változat keltezhető a 8. századra, ám sok közülük egyidőben volt divatban (különösen a század első évtizedeiben; a legtöbb felgyűjtött bronz példány mindhárom változathoz ezen időszakra keltezhető).

Szóródásuk alapján e fülbevalók elsősorban a Szerémség nyugati területén voltak kedveltek; erre utal a felhasznált anyagok (bronz és ezüst) és az alkalmazott technológiák (formába préselés, formába öntés, esetleg viaszveszejtési öntés) változatossága is. Gyakori, hogy több változat példánya kerül elő egy-egy sírból, akár csak az, hogy a csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalót más csüngővel együtt viselték (egy esetben például halántékkarikaként). Anton Distelberger e „kevert“ leletegyütteseket teaurálással magyarázta, ám ez több szempontból is problematikus; valószínűbb, hogy a többféle fülbevalóval és/vagy csüngővel eltemetett nők az egyes darabokra életük eltérő szakaszaiban tettek szert, és nem kizárt, hogy egyszerre, együtt viselték őket.

A legérdekesebb kérdés persze a választás oka, hiszen ezek a fülbevalótípusok a vizsgált területen számos lelőhelyről teljesen hiányoznak. Minthogy minden közösség számára elérhető volt a többi késő avar, sőt számos mediterrán, bizánci ékszertípus is, azt kell gondolnunk, hogy a választás tudatos volt. Az egyes típusok elterjedése – az eltérő temetkezési rítussal (vázás, illetve hamvasztásos) együtt – talán különböző identitású közösségek együttélését rajzolja ki előttünk a mai Szerémség nyugati területein. További kutatás nélkül jelenleg nem állapítható meg biztosan, hogy a csillag alakú csüngős fülbevalók egy-egy egyén vagy közösség ízlését és választásait tükrözik-e, vagy az egyes közösségek tehetősebb tagjai identitásjelzőként, esetleg státuszszimbólumként (az egyszerű karikafülbevalós avar többségtől való különállás hangsúlyozására) viselték őket.