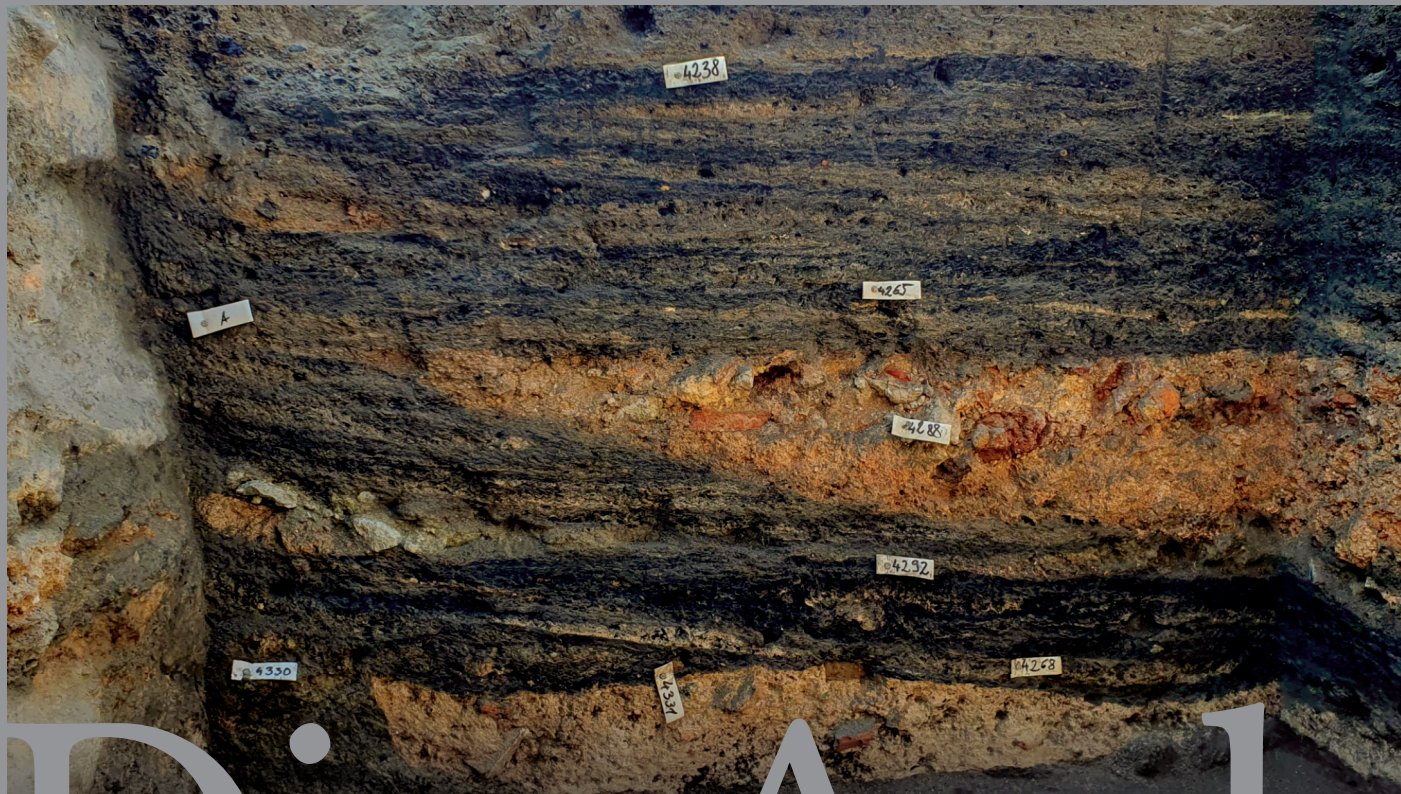


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The concept of the ancient homeland of the Fenno-Ugric-speaking peoples
in light of complex research

New specimen of an Early Iron Age brooch type from Western Transdanubia

A stray find from Simaság

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Abstract: The museum obtained the two-loop nodular (or knobbed) bow brooch, a stray find, in 1970. The jewellery, 66 mm long and weighing 22.6 g, is still in good condition today. Its shape is a mixture of Types 6a and 6d in Stane Gabrovec's system, which were in vogue in the Ha C1–2 phases, i.e., from the mid-8th to the mid-7th centuries BC. In lack of a find context and accompanying finds, the artefact in focus cannot be dated more precisely within this period; the topographical position of its findspot fills an empty area in the foregrounds of the Eastern Alps.

Keywords: Early Iron Age, clothing accessory, brooch, western Hungary

*To the twentieth anniversary of the death of Gábor Vékony,
my professor at the university*

The brooch in the focus of this short paper was obtained by Terézia P. Buócz, a museologist of the Savaria Museum, specialised in Roman Period archaeology, from a member of the Fazekas family in Újkér in July 1970. It was found in a stone quarry, abandoned since, on the outskirts of the village (Fig. 1). The presented data were recorded in the inventory book of the museum by archaeologist Mária Károlyi (specialised in Prehistory); as half a century has passed since, there is no possibility to confirm or specify them today. Besides this piece, Bronze Age and Roman Period finds are known from the area of the quarry.¹ However, publishing this single Early Iron Age find is important because, amongst other reasons, such papers draw attention to that research may be enriched with important new data by introducing forgotten finds to the scientific circulation.

Description of the artefact

The cast bronze double-loop nodular bow brooch (or knobbed bow brooch, *Knotenfibel*) is covered in beautiful green patina, which was only scratched at the middle of the pin and between the second and third nodes (counted from the catchplate). Its bow is decorated by eight 7 mm-wide nodes and terminals at both ends in an octangular, tapered part, each of which ends in a slightly angular, single loop. The catchplate and a part of the loop above it are missing. The pointy pin is about

1 KÁROLYI 1975, 186–187, Pl. 5. 3–9; MÁRTON – ILON 2024, in press.

2 mm in diameter and has a round profile. The brooch is 54 mm high (bow height, without nodes) and 66 mm long; it weighs 22.6 g. It was coated in transparent, shiny varnish during conservation to prevent further corrosion. Prehistoric collection of the Savaria Museum in Szombathely, Inv. no. 71.38.1 (Fig. 2.a–b).

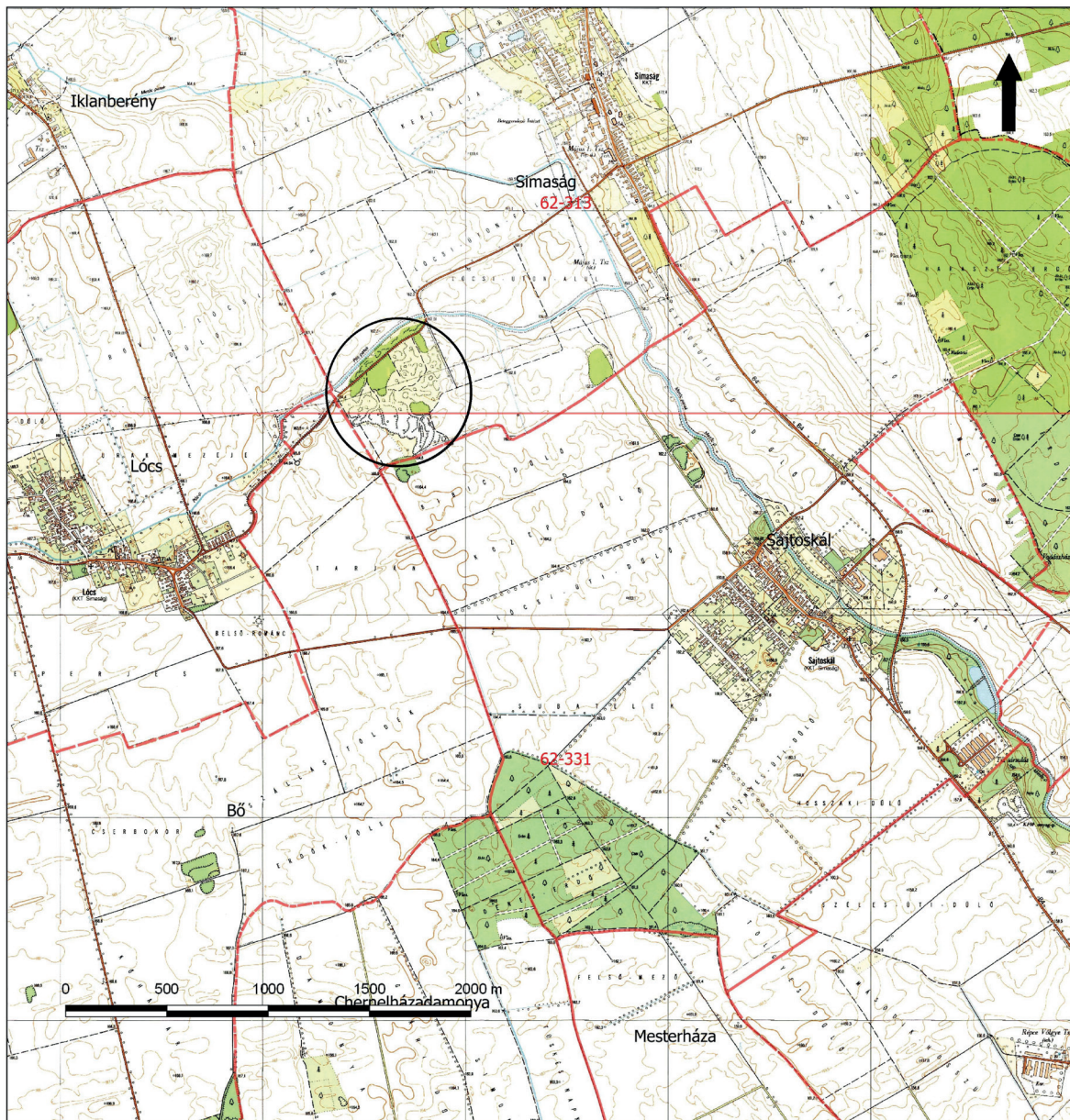


Fig. 1. The former stone quarry at Simaság on a topographic map (scale: 1:10 000; graphics by Gy. Isztin).

Analogies, dating, and topographic significance

At the dawn of Hungarian archaeology, Lajos Márton discussed the two stray brooches from Nak, Tolna County, amongst the *Watscher Knotenfibeln* ('Watsch-type knobbed/nodular brooches'), a variant of the two-loop type which he referred to as 'bow brooches'. The bow of one of these pieces (No. 37 in Márton's publication) is decorated with eight nodes and terminals on both sides, akin to the piece from Simaság, in tapered ends with quadrangular(?) profile. A difference between the two is that between the knobs, the bow of the piece from Nak is covered in engraved hatching; the

presumed triangular catchplate is missing from that object, too.² In later studies, Herrmann Müller-Karpe referred to the type as *Knotenfibel* ('knobbed/nodular bow brooch') and dated it to the Ha B3 phase based on a find from Grave 144 of the cemetery of Ruše/Maria Rast near Maribor in Slovenia. According to new radiocarbon data from Slovenia, this phase represents the start of the Early Iron Age there between the mid-9th and the mid-8th centuries BC.³ A stray find from Nejdek, a site of the Podoli Culture in Moravia, was (mistakenly) dated earlier than that.⁴ The piece from Simaság has no triangular or hourglass-shaped catchplate, a feature characteristic of some of the earliest variants, dated to the 8th century BC.⁵ The shape of the brooch in focus can be described as a mixture of Types 6a and 6d in Stane Gabrovec's system:⁶ the spring has only a single coil, a feature of Type 6a brooches, but the ends of the bow are multiangular, a trait of Type 6d. Such brooches are known from Northwest Transdanubia from Tumulus 227/1976 of Sopron-Burgstall,⁷ and from three sites (Nak, Nagyberki-Szalacska, and Szentlőrinc) in South Transdanubia.⁸

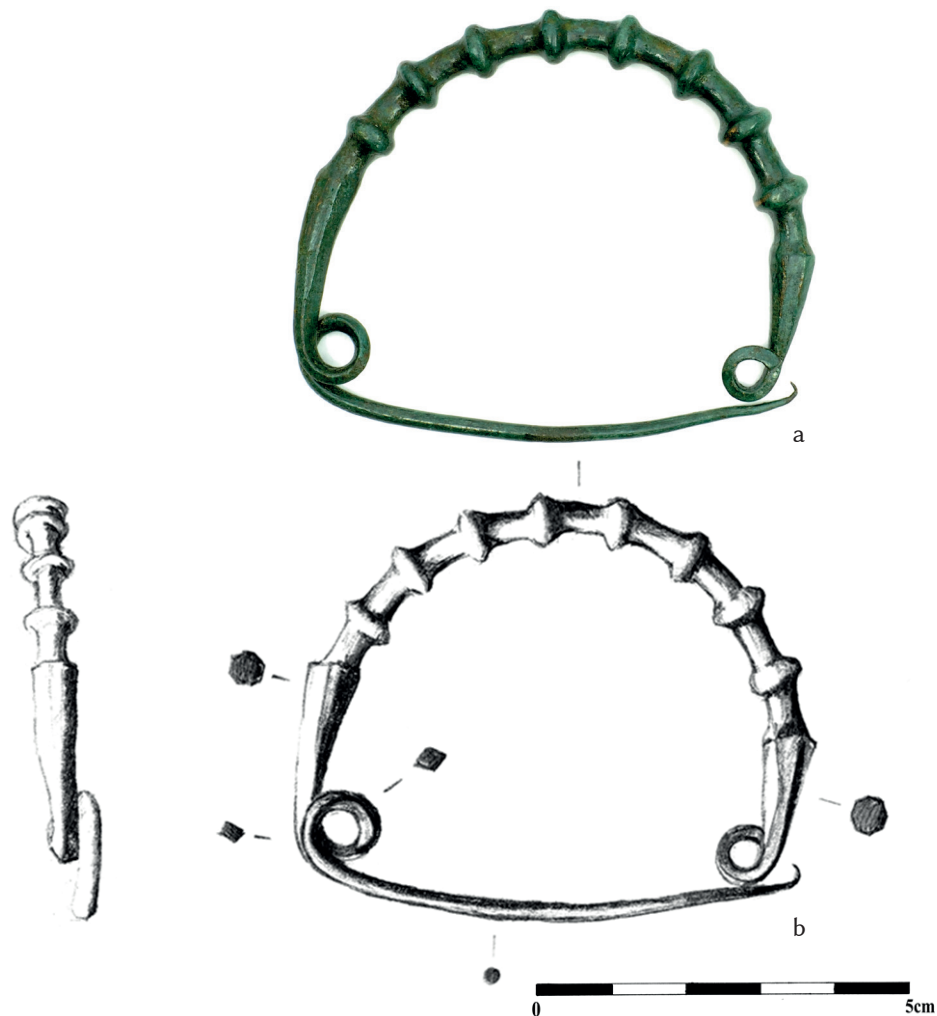


Fig. 2. Bronze brooch from Simaság (drawing by O. Kántor, photo by T. Tárczy).

- 2 MÁRTON 1913, 147–152, Pl. 6. 37.
- 3 MÜLLER-KARPE 1959, 116, 132, Taf. 113/A. 1, Abb. 64; TERŽAN – ČREŠNAR 2014, 722.
- 4 PODBORSKÝ 1970, 125, Abb. 15. 3, 215, site list, under No. 57.
- 5 METZNER-NEBELSICK 2002, 414, Abb. 184–185.
- 6 GABROVEC 1970, 30, Map 9.
- 7 PATEK 1982, 144, Abb. 20. 1.
- 8 For the most recent distribution map, see LOŽNJAK DIZDAR 2019, Fig. 6.

The nodular/knobbed bow indicates the connection of the type with the early Hallstatt Culture. Current research has dated the emergence of such two-loop brooch variants to the Ha C1 phase, i.e., between the second half of the 8th and the early decades of the 7th century BC. Carola Metzner-Nebelsick believes the type to be a characteristic accessory of female attire in the area of Southeast Pannonia and has assigned it to the horizon marked by pottery horizon IIIa and hoard horizon VI.⁹ This hypothesis is corroborated by a similar brooch with eleven nodes on its bow (Type 6a in Gabrovec's system) from Grave 1 in Sotin, Slovenia, a dual burial of an adult woman and a child, dated to the end of the 8th–early 7th century BC.¹⁰ This dating by Metzner-Nebelsick sets the chronological position of the type a century before the one-time assumption of Gallus on the time of the emergence of HaC in the area of Hungary.¹¹ The bow of a member of the brooch pair from Grave 526 of the cemetery of Bischofschofen, Austria, bears eighteen discoid knobs and terminals in multiangular, tapered ends; it was dated to the second half of the 7th century BC.¹² The bow of the piece from Bratislava-Devín is decorated with four knobs; the tapered ends have a quadrangular profile, while the spring, the pin, and the catchplate are missing. It was dated to the Ha C2 phase based on available analogies.¹³

Distribution maps of the brooch type in question were made lately by Stane Gabrovec,¹⁴ Biba Teržan,¹⁵ and, recently, Katarína Harmadyová¹⁶ and Daria Ložnjak Dizdar.¹⁷ Alexia Nascimbene believes that the basic variant of the type was only in fashion in the area of Veneto (e.g., Grave 2 of Este, Fondo Pela, with a simple one-loop specimen with four knobs, hatching on the bow between them, and tapered ends, dated to the final phase of the Bronze Age, i.e. the 10th century BC¹⁸), Slovenia, and the Inner Balkans (Donja Dolina, Glasinac). She thinks that the variants may spread throughout the continent or along the shores.¹⁹ It has been clarified by today that the type first emerged in the *Caput Adriae*, i.e., the East Alpine region,²⁰ from where it may spread to the territories of South Transdanubia, the area of Hallstatt in Austria, and the area of Bratislava in Slovakia. The stray find from Simaság, a site south of Sopron-Burgstall on the northern bank of the Répce River, represents a link marking the route connecting the area of origin with the latter (Bratislava area) (Fig. 3). Especially important sites from the period are a cemetery at Hegyfalú (near Simaság), a settlement at Gôr, a bronze hoard found at Ikervár, and the 'religious-historical' finds in the record of the settlement unearthed at Vát.²¹

Vače-type knobbed/nodular bow brooches, consisting of an iron core covered with bronze sheet metal, represent a distinct sub-type.²² The shape of these is identical to the piece from Simaság.

9 METZNER-NEBELSICK 2002, 169, 172, 178, 413–416, 425, Abb. 74, Abb. 78, Abb. 184; TERŽAN – ČREŠNAR 2014, 724; METZNER-NEBELSICK 2017, Fig. 2.

10 Its dimensions (height: 55 mm, length: 70 mm) are almost identical to the piece from Simaság; see LOŽNJAK DIZDAR 2019, 98, 110–111, Fig. 4, T. 2. 1; RAJIĆ ŠIKANJIĆ – LOŽNJAK DIZDAR 2022, 30, Fig. 1.

11 GALLUS – HORVÁTH 1939, 130.

12 LIPPERT – STADLER 2009, 26, Taf. 155. 526/4. This site is missing from the map published in LOŽNJAK DIZDAR 2019, Fig. 6.

13 HARMADYOVÁ 2016, 107, Fig. 1.

14 GABROVEC 1970, Karta 9.

15 TERŽAN 1990, 215, Karta 10.

16 HARMADYOVÁ 2016, Fig. 2.

17 LOŽNJAK DIZDAR 2019, Fig. 6.

18 VON ELES MASI 1986, 30–31, Tav. 13.234.

19 NASCIMBENE 2009, 10, Fig. 4. 1.

20 METZNER-NEBELSICK 2002, 415.

21 MOLNÁR 2006; ILON 2008; NAGY *et al.* 2012; MOLNÁR – FARKAS 2010.

22 GABROVEC 1970, Tab. 20. 1; GUŠTIN – PRELOŽNIK 2005, 156.

Such a brooch is known, e.g., from Grave 75 of Vukovar-Lijeva bara; the triangular specimen was found together with Late Urnfield-style pottery.²³ A further example is known from Grave 6(f) of Podzemelj, Tumulus X,²⁴ two stray pieces from the material of the 1892 campaign and one from Grave 1 of Tumulus 9 of the Ha C cemetery of Sajeve in Slovenia,²⁵ one from Grave 2/7 of Podzemelj, and yet another from Grave 1/6 of Pusti Gradac; all were dated to the Podzemelj 2 (= Ljubljana IIIa) phase and represent a flagship brooch type of the period.²⁶ The fragments of several such brooches have been published from the cemetery of Batina.²⁷

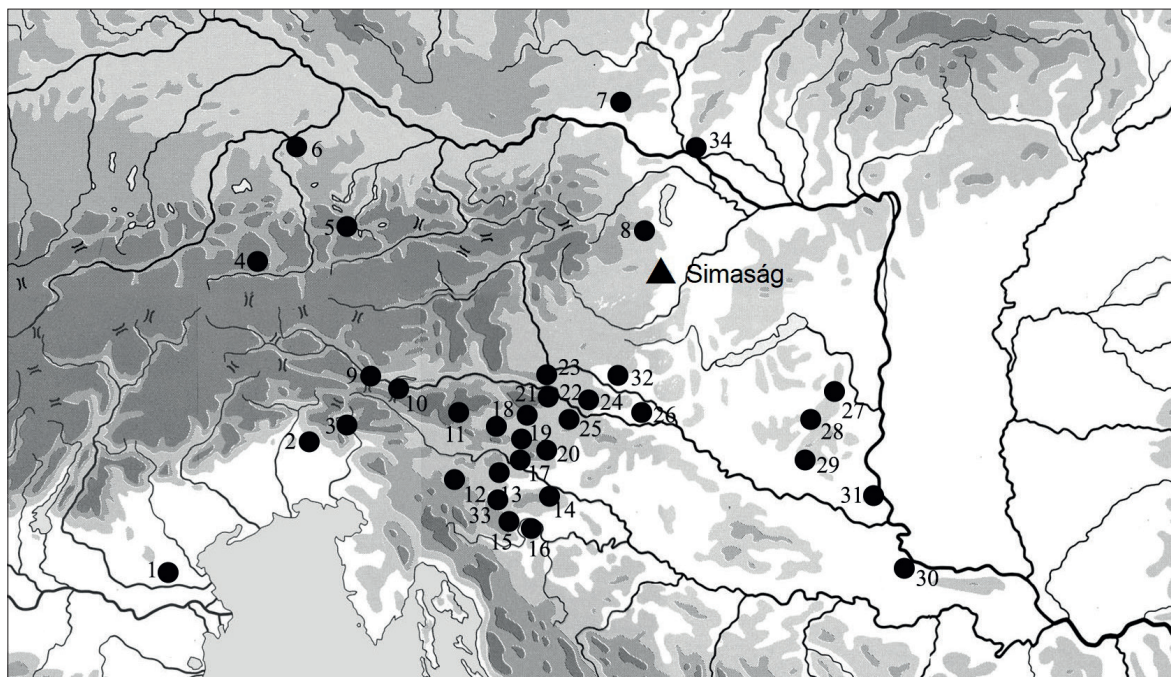


Fig. 3. Distribution of knobbed/nodular bow brooches (*Knobbenfibeln*) (after LOŽNJAK DIZDAR 2019, Fig. 6).

Summary

Even if a stray find, the double-loop knotted bow brooch recovered from the area of a long-abandoned stone quarry on the outskirts of Simaság is worth the attention of research on the Bronze Age. This find adds not only to our current knowledge on other sites, several of international recognition, in the valleys of the Rába and Répce rivers, but also fills a gap in the distribution of the type.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Biba Teržan and Janez Dular (Slovenia), as well as Peter Romsauer (Slovakia), for their invaluable contribution that made writing this paper possible for me. I am grateful to Orsolya Kántor for the exquisite illustration, Tamás Tárczy for the informative photos, and Gyula Isztin (Szombathely) for completing the map included in the manuscript, as well as the director of the Savaria Museum for the possibility to publish this find, forgotten for decades. I also thank Katalin Sebők for the English version of the text.

23 METZNER-NEBELSICK 2002, 425.

24 LIU 2021, 47, Abb. 20, Taf. 16.

25 GUŠTIN – PRELOŽNIK 2005, 115, 167, Fig. 4.1–2; 121–124, Fig. 12.1.

26 DULAR 2003, 116–117, Abb. 63B.8, Abb. 63C.10, Taf. 41. Gr. 1/6.6.

27 METZNER-NEBELSICK 2002, Taf. 14.6, Taf. 27.12, Taf. 32.4.

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