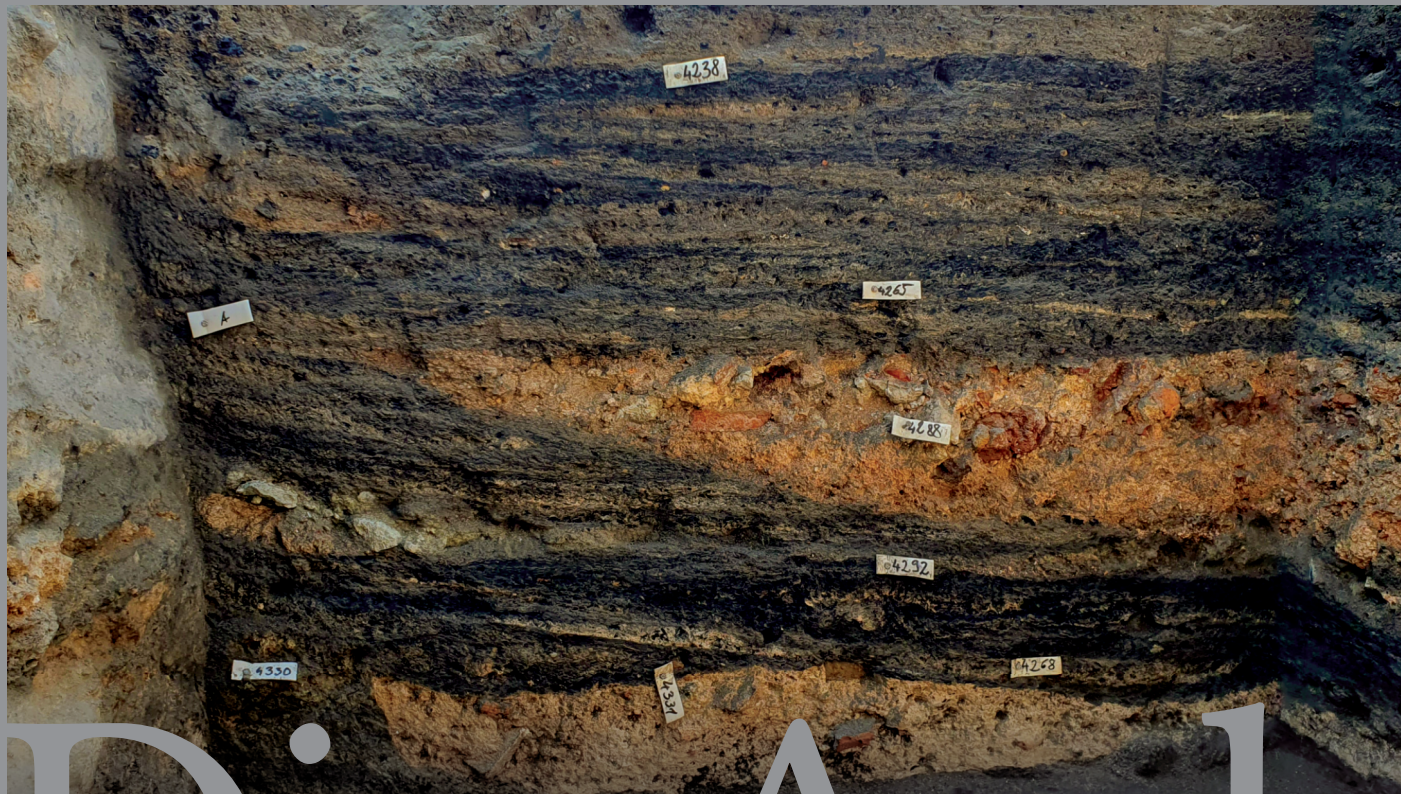


DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico

Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



DissArch

Ser. 3. No. 12. | 2024

Dissertationes Archaeologicae
ex Instituto Archaeologico
Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae

Ser. 3. No. 12.

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ISSN 2064-4574 (online)

Publisher

László BORHY

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

Box-shaped cloak clasps in the Late Avar Period

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Received 5 October 2024 | Accepted 13 November 2024 | Published 24 January 2025

Abstract: The paper focuses on Late Avar box-shaped cloak clasps. Although only thirty specimens are known from the Carpathian Basin, they are significant due to their high-quality workmanship. The type appears mainly in the northwestern part of the Avar Khaganate, along the Danube and in the northern part of the Danube–Tisza Interfluvium; its spread can be linked to the main trade routes. Based on the related find assemblages, it was in fashion from the second half of the 8th century and was still in use in the first decades of the 9th century.

Keywords: box-shaped cloak clasps, jewellery, Late Avar Period, female attire, representation

Introduction

The cloak clasps that fastened women's overgarments are a typical Late Avar artefact type. Previously, the type was thought to originate from the steppe and, recently, from Byzantium; thus, it has become the focus of research from time to time. It appeared sporadically in the late phase of the Early Avar Period, i.e. the first third or second quarter of the 7th century,¹ but it only became popular in the second half of the Avar Period. The type is typically associated with burials of relatively wealthy women and girls but is not exclusive to them. This paper discusses a special cloak clasp type, the so-called box-shaped cloak clasps, an emblematic element of the 8th-century archaeological record, including a detailed overview of its geographical distribution, chronological position, and an attempt at typological classification.

History of research

In the history of research into the Early Middle Ages, Flóris Rómer was the first to discuss box-shaped cloak clasps; he published a specimen found at Dunapataj.² Next, József Hampel delved into the topic.³ Later, Nándor Fettich reconstructed the originally missing central gem inlay of the cloak clasp from Dunapataj.⁴ The first typology of cloak clasps was published by Tibor Horváth in 1935. He was the first to identify them as elements of women's clothing and date their fashion to

1 BALOGH 2000, 226.

2 RÓMER 1870, 306–308.

3 HAMPEL 1894, 36; HAMPEL 1905, Vol. 1, 66; HAMPEL 1905, Vol. 2, 389–390; HAMPEL 1905, Vol. 3, Taf. 282.

4 TOMPA *et al.* 1938, 152, 163. kép.

the 8th century.⁵ Danica Dimitrijević assigned the cloak clasps from Dunapataj to the circle of late Lombard and Frankish gold art based on their pattern, but she did not write about their Byzantine origin.⁶ It was Gyula László who discovered connections between the cloak clasp from Dunapataj and certain items from the Sânnicolau Mare/Nagyszentmiklós treasure.⁷ Other scholars later refined the chronological position of this jewellery type, dating its fashion between the second half of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century.⁸ One of the most recent summaries on the subject was written by Béla Kürti and Erika Wicker, who found analogies to the object type at the fringes of the Eurasian steppe.⁹

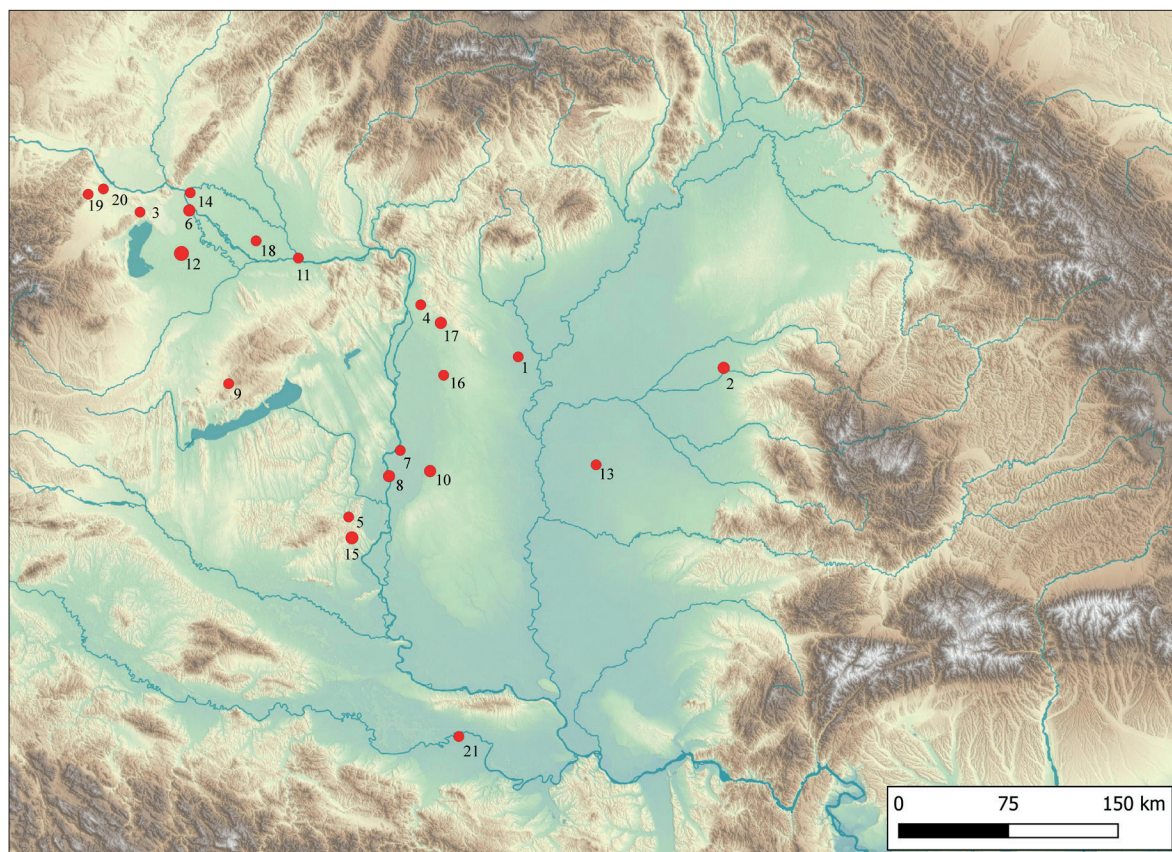


Fig. 1. Distribution of box-shaped cloak clasps in the Carpathian Basin. 1 – Abony, 2 – Ártánd, 3 – Bruckneudorf, 4 – Budapest-Rákos, 5 – Cikó, 6 – Čunovo, 7 – Dunapataj, 8 – Gerjen, 9 – Halimba, 10 – Kecel, 11 – Komárno, 12 – Mosonszentjános, 13 – Orosháza, 14 – Podunajské Biskupice, 15 – Szebény, 16 – Tatárszentgyörgy, 17 – Üllő, 18 – Velký Meder, 19 – Vösendorf, 20 – Wien, 21 – Zaslavica (Sirmium).

Based on recent research, the type has more likely late antique and Byzantine origins. Although Flóris Rómer and Tibor Horváth shared similar views, Éva Garam was the first to formulate a detailed theory about the box-shaped cloak clasp of Dunapataj.¹⁰ The direction set by her was later developed further by Csilla Balogh.¹¹ Gábor Kiss examined a small die, a stray find from the vicinity of Békéscsaba with secondarily engraved Byzantine-type negative patterns, which led him to be-

5 HORVÁTH 1935, 59–62.

6 HORVÁTH 1935, 59–62.

7 LÁSZLÓ 1967, 151.

8 KOVRIG 1963, 143–144; SZABÓ 1968, 48; ČILINSKÁ 1975, 83; GARAM 1978, 215; KÜRTI – WICKER 1991, 21.

9 KÜRTI – WICKER 1991, 19–34.

10 GARAM 1989, 144–148.

11 BALOGH 2000, 222–223.

lieve that the item served as decoration for a Dunapataj-style box-shaped cloak clasp. According to Kiss, both the Dunapataj cloak clasp and the die can be dated to the turn of the 7th–8th century.¹²

In recent years, Austrian research has emphasised the Byzantine origin of some of the box-shaped cloak clasps. Birgit Bühler and Falko Daim argued on the basis of the patterns and technical characteristics that the cloak clasp from Dunapataj could have been made in a Byzantine workshop or that the object was the work of an Avar goldsmith who could create objects in Byzantine style.¹³ Recently, technical analogies to the glass inlays found in Grave 81 of Komárno-Lodenice (Slovakia) have also been found in the Mediterranean.¹⁴ Examining a box recently found in Sorpe in Spain, Falko Daim and Péter Prohászka came to the conclusion that its lid could have been a box-shaped cloak clasp. Good analogies to the emperor's portrait it bears are known from an 8th-century Avar belt fitting. The authors proposed that, based on iconography, the object could have been made on order, based on a Byzantine prototype, by an Avar craftsman, or it could have arrived in the Khagan's treasury from the territory of the Carolingian Empire. Its appearance in the West was explained by Frankish plunder campaigns.¹⁵ Gergely Szenthe approached the issue of box clasps from an ornamentation's point of view. In his opinion, the pieces from Dunapataj and Sirmium (more precisely, Zasavica in Serbia) clearly originate from the Mediterranean and can be considered a prototype of this jewellery type.¹⁶

Raw material

Box-shaped cloak clasps were made of wood covered with lavishly ornamented metal sheets. The unearthed specimens can also be classified according to the material of the cover plate, on which data is available for 28 of the thirty known specimens (Fig. 1, Tab. 1). The pieces from Dunapataj, Zasavica, and Budapest-Rákos were made of gold. Five others have been covered with gilded bronze sheets. These were found mainly west and north of the Danube, save for the one in Grave 184 of Üllő in the Danube–Tisza Interfluve. The cover plates of twenty other specimens were made of bronze.¹⁷ Their characteristic decoration is a glass inlay at the centre. The predecessor of the beaded frame could have been made of pearls, as reconstructed by Gergely Szenthe in connection with the Dunapataj specimen.¹⁸ The remains of the cloak clasps found in Grave 138 of the Szebény I cemetery are stored in the Hungarian National Museum in a pack that also contains beads; these perhaps originally belonged to the jewellery item.¹⁹

Typology of box-shaped cloak clasps

Béla Kürti and Erika Wicker developed the typology of Avar Period cloak clasps; however, they classified all box-shaped cloak clasps into a single category, Group IV.²⁰ In the following, an attempt is presented to classify these artefacts more precisely based on shape and ornamentation. Two highly fragmented specimens could not be classified (Fig. 4.5,7), while the rest were rendered into three main categories based on shape:

12 KISS 2003, 301.

13 DAIM – BÜHLER 2012; DAIM 2017b.

14 BÜHLER 2014, 143.

15 PROHÁSZKA – DAIM 2015; DAIM 2017a, 416–419. As this paper focuses on cloak clasps from the Carpathian Basin, the specimen found at Sorpe was not included in the study.

16 SZENTHE 2020, 305.

17 Some of them may also have been gilded, but no trace persisted.

18 SZENTHE 2020, 305.

19 We thank Zsófia Básti for the information.

20 KÜRTI – WICKER 1991, 20.

- I. Rectangular cloak clasps. Three pieces belong to this variant, all with unique ornamentation. Subvariants cannot be defined at this moment (Fig. 2).
- II. Round cloak clasps. Four pieces belong to this variant, all with unique ornamentation (Fig. 3).
- III. Oval cloak clasps. Most of the twenty cloak clasps are oval, but two cannot be classified into subvariants due to the poor quality of the publication and its highly fragmented state, respectively (Fig. 4.5, Fig. 9). The remaining specimens were divided into six subvariants, the first of which (IIIa) includes only the specimen from Tatárszentgyörgy with imitation multiple-row beaded frame and central inlay case and short cast-on ribs between them (Fig. 4.1). The pieces in the second subvariant (IIIb) bear identical decoration but with an actual glass inlay at the centre (Fig. 4.2–5). On the specimens of the third subvariant (IIIc), the frame and the central inlay case consist of imitations of large elongated granulations (Fig. 5.1–4). The improved version (Subvariant IIId) has an actual glass inlay (Fig. 5.5–9). The two cloak clasps from Mosonszentjános, with actual glass inlay at the centre of a densely punched plate, represent Subvariant IIIe (Fig. 6.1–2), while the pieces in Subvariant IIIf bear relief decoration around the central glass inlay (Fig. 6.3–5).



Fig. 2. Rectangular cloak clasps. 1 – Abony, 2 – Zasavica, 3 – Dunapataj (1: after ÉBER 1902; 2: after POPOVIĆ 2005; 3: after GARAM 2001).

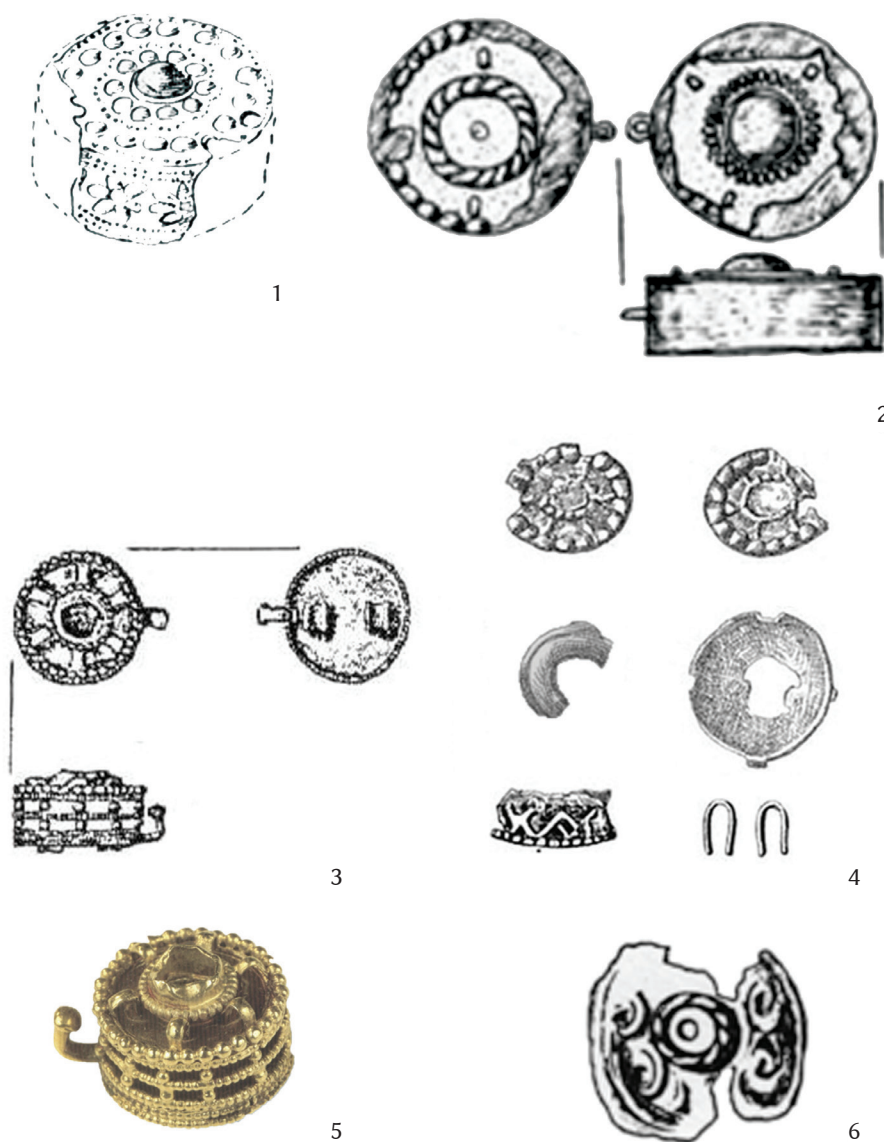


Fig. 3. Round cloak clasps. 1 – Szebény Grave 237, 2 – Cikó, 3, 5 – Budapest-Rákosszentimre, 4 – Čunovo Grave 111, 6 – Mosonszentjános Grave 23 (1: after [GARAM 1975](#); 2: after [KISS – SOMOGYI 1984](#); 3: after [NAGY 1998](#); 4 – after [SŐTÉR 1895](#); 5 – after [GARAM 2001](#); 6 – after [HORVÁTH 2017](#)).

Distribution

Data is available in the literature about thirty box-shaped cloak clasps from 21 sites, all from graves save for three stray finds. Based on that, four concentrations can be observed in the scatter of the type: the westernmost one in the Little Hungarian Plain and the Vienna Basin, one on the Pest Plain, two smaller concentrations in the western part of the Danube–Tisza Interfluve and at Gerjen on the right bank of the river, and in Eastern Transdanubia, at the border of Tolna and Baranya counties. However, it is possible that the latter two clusters originally formed a single one. In addition, specimens occasionally appear along the Danube (Komárno-Lodenice, Zasavica), and single finds of the type are known from the inner parts of Transdanubia (Halimba-Belátó halom), and the Trans-Tisza Region (Orosháza-Bónum and Ártánd-Kapitány-dűlő), respectively. The four large groups contain a diverse number of cloak clasps: ten are known from the northwestern part of the Carpathian Basin, five from the Pest Plain and the left bank of the Danube, respectively, and four from southern Transdanubia.

Most sites are located along the Danube or in its immediate vicinity. Most box-shaped cloak clasps from the Danube–Tisza Interfluvium were found along the assumed route that connected the estuary of the Maros River and the wider area of the Danube Bend.²¹ Besides, such accessories appear in large cemeteries (e.g., Halimba, Ártánd), the communities of which may have been significant on microregional level.

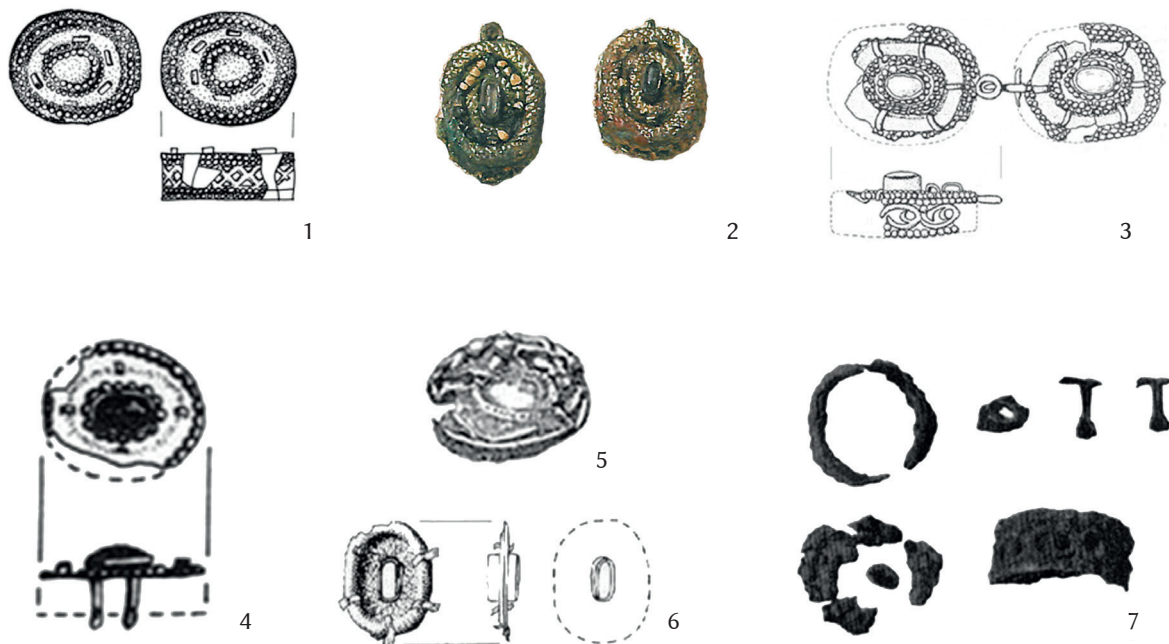


Fig. 4. Oval cloak clasps. 1 – Tatárszentgyörgy, 2 – Vösendorf, 3 – Wien, 4 – Gerjen, stray find, 5 – Čunovo, Grave 61, 6 – Orosháza, 7 – Kecel (1: after BALOGH 2013; 2: after SAUER 2007; 3 – after DAIM 1981; 4 – after KISS – SOMOGYI 1984; 5 – after SÓTÉR 1895; 6 – after JUHÁSZ 1995; 7 – after Cs. Sós 1958).

Further trends can be observed regarding the distribution of individual variants (Fig. 7). Rectangular specimens (I) only occur east of the Danube, in contrast to round ones (II), which, except for the gold cloak clasp from Budapest-Rákosszentpál, were all found in Transdanubia. As for Variant III, five pieces come from the Great Hungarian Plain, four from Slovakia, and eleven from Transdanubia. Only Subvariant IIIf appears in a concentration, as it is (currently) exclusive to the Mosonszentjános cemetery. Three pieces can be classified into Subvariants IIIb and IIIf each, two of which have been found at the western border of the Avar Khaganate and one in southeast Transdanubia, suggesting a connection between these regions. Specimens of Subvariants IIIc and IIId cover the largest areas.

Dating of the assemblages

Research has traditionally dated box-shaped cloak clasps to the second half of the Late Avar Period. In contrast to this relatively young dating, Éva Garam proposed a late 7th–early 8th-century dating for the cloak clasp of Dunapataj. However, she also noted that oval clasps were probably in fashion later, in the second half of the century.²² Béla Kürti and Erika Wicker dated these accessories to the end of the 8th century.²³ Péter Prohászka and Falko Daim dated the majority of the box-shaped clasps to the second half, or more precisely, to the last third of the 8th century, based partly

21 SZENTHE – GÁLL 2021, 352.

22 GARAM 1989, 151.

23 KÜRTI – WICKER 1991, 21.

on accompanying grave finds and partly on their floral patterns.²⁴ Eric Breuer dated Horizon 7, which also includes box-shaped cloak clasps, to the end of the 8th or the very beginning of the 9th century.²⁵ In the following, we examine each assemblage based on the accompanying grave finds.

Three of the thirty analysed pieces are stray finds from Gerjen, Dunapataj, and Zasavica, respectively, while another three come from otherwise unpublished find assemblages.²⁶ The remaining 24 pieces come from graves abounding with items (see [Tab. 2](#)), which is a great help in specifying the dating of the type. The most common finds of the related graves were oval hoop earrings with bead pendants (appearing in sixteen graves) representing Zlatá Čilinská's Type X, which she dated to the 8th century.²⁷ Éva Garam suggested a more precise dating for similar earrings from Tiszafüred, narrowing down their use to the second half of the century.²⁸ The earring from the Tatárszentgyörgy grave has a round hoop and a melon seed-shaped bead pendant. Adrien Pásztor dated such earrings with a round hoop to the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th century.²⁹ It must be noted that earrings with roundish hoops reappeared in the Pilismarót-Basaharc cemetery in the second half of the 8th century; however, these were usually decorated with several beads and elaborate applied decoration on the sides of the hoop and at the beads.³⁰

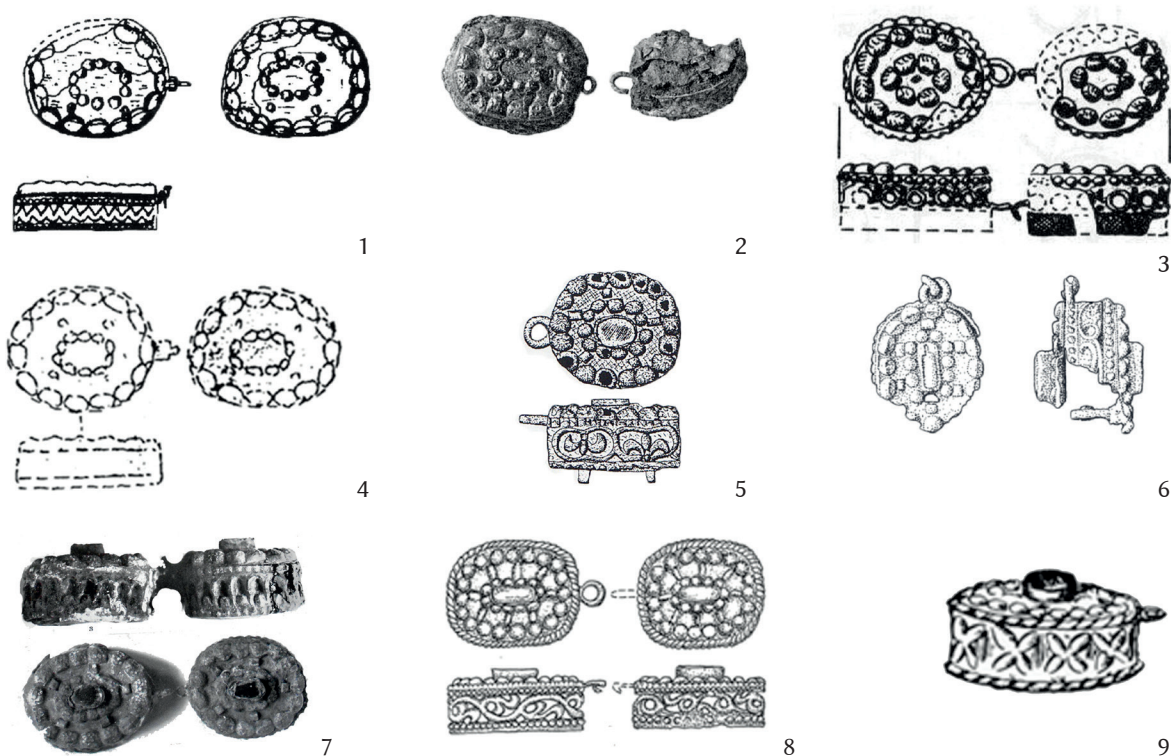


Fig. 5. 1 – Ártánd, Grave 108, 2 – Halimba, 3 – Gerjen, Grave 77, 4 – Ártánd, Grave 260, 5 – Üllő, Grave 184, 6 – Velký Meder, 7 – Üllő, Grave 201, 8 – Komárno, 9 – Szebény, Grave 138 (1, 4: after [KRALOVÁNSZKY 1996](#); 2: after [TÖRÖK 1998](#); 3: after [KISS – SOMOGYI 1984](#); 5, 7: after [HORVÁTH 1935](#); 6: [ZÁBOJNÍK – VARSÍK 2021](#); 8: after [TRUGLY 2008](#); 9: after [GARAM 1975](#)).

24 [PROHÁSZKA – DAIM 2015](#), 567–571.

25 [BREUER 2005](#), 116–117.

26 Some grave goods are known from a published image of the Podunajské Biskupice grave.

27 [ČILINSKÁ 1975](#), 79–80.

28 [GARAM 1995](#), 280.

29 [PÁSZTOR 1986](#), 128–129.

30 E.g. [FETTICH 1965](#), 58, Abb. 91.1; 71, Abb. 120.5.

Nine graves also contained gold- and silver-foiled segmented beads, which Béla Miklós Szőke dated to the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries. The black beads decorated with continuous yellow lines found in Cikó, Vösendorf, and Velký Meder and a mosaic-eyed bead from Vösendorf (Fig. 8) can also be linked to a similar horizon.³¹ Melon seed beads are a characteristic type of the Late Avar record. Adrien Pásztor classified the melon seed beads from Székkutas into four groups based on their shape, into two categories based on the shape of the perforation, and into three based on translucency. She believed that such beads were in vogue during the entire use of the cemetery, i.e. from the last third of the 7th to the 9th century.³² According to Béla Miklós Szőke, necklaces consisting only of melon seed beads are characteristic primarily of the first half of the Late Avar Period, only appearing in a few cemeteries (Zalakomár, Pilismarót-Basaharc) later.³³ The situation was likely the same on some sites in the western part of the Carpathian Basin (e.g., Čunovo, Slovakia), where mosaic eye and segmented beads were almost entirely absent.



Fig. 6. 1 – Mosonszentjános, Grave 140, 2 – Mosonszentjános, Grave 215, 3 – Bruckneudorf, 4 – Szebény, Grave 211, 5 – Mosonszentjános, Grave 137 (1, 2, 5: after Courtesy of the editors of the Avar Corpus series; 3: after SAUER 2013; 4: after GARAM 1975).

31 SZŐKE 1992, 874–881.

32 PÁSZTOR 2003, 347.

33 SZŐKE 1992, 873–874.

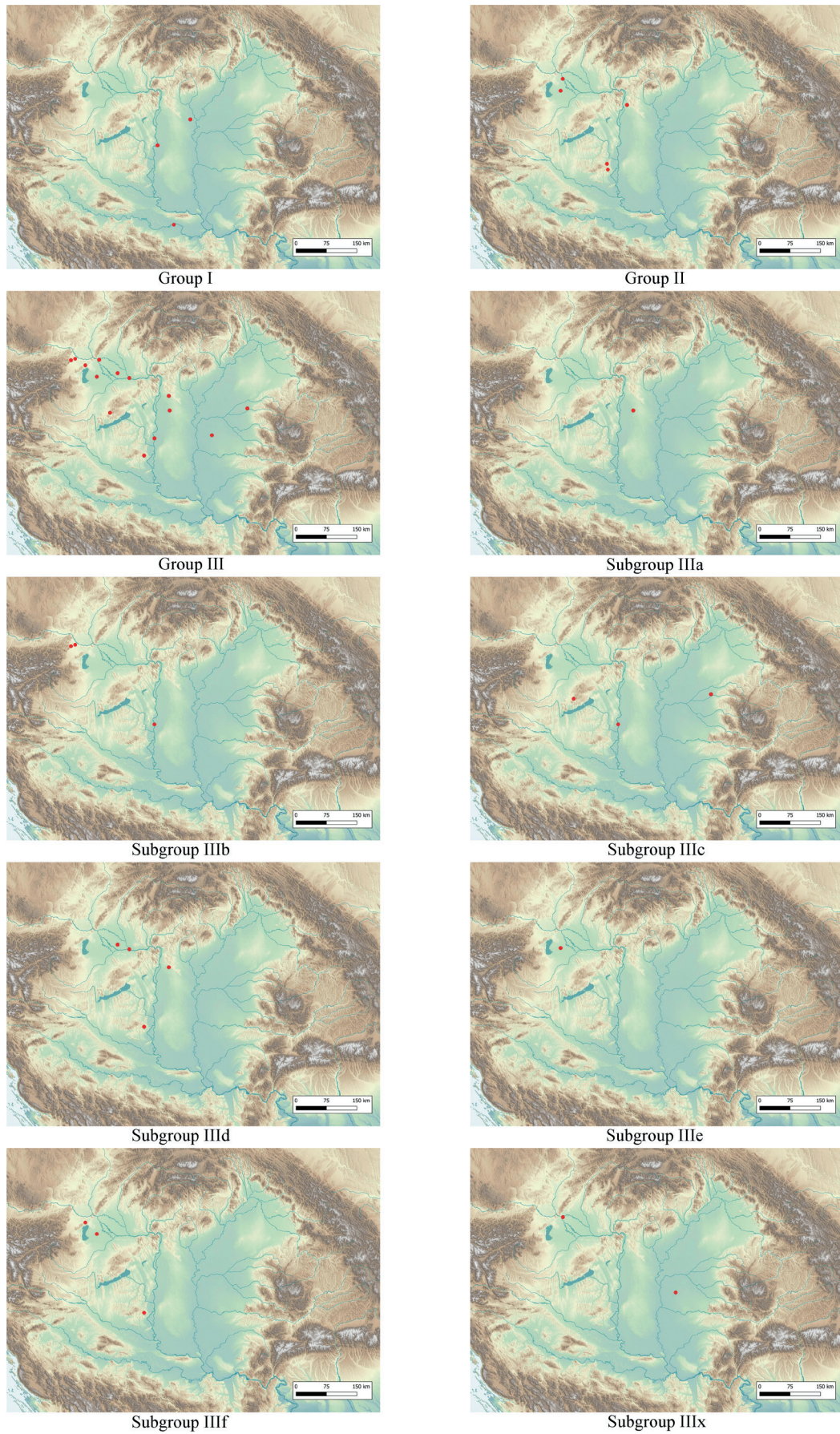


Fig. 7. Distribution of box-shaped cloak clasps variants.

Zlata Čilinská classified the rings with glass inlay, similar to the one known from Halimba, into her Type IV. These rings were used for a relatively long time; they appeared in the middle of the 7th century and were still in fashion in the 8th century.³⁴ Most of the bracelets with punched decoration, similar to the items found in Halimba and Grave 137 at Mosonszentjános, can be dated to the very end of the Avar Period, but they remained in vogue in the Carpathian Basin even in the 9th century.³⁵ In the case of bracelets, we can rely not only on typochronology but also on wearing style; according to Eric Breuer, it became common for women to wear three or more bracelets at the end of the Avar Period.³⁶ This custom appears in graves in both Abony and Halimba.



Fig. 8. Grave 157 of Vösendorf (after SAUER 2007).

The lily motif on items is another element of dating value in the related record. Belt mounts with a lily motif were found at Budapest-Rákos and in Grave 137 of Mosonszentjános, while Grave 23 of Mosonszentjános held a strap end decorated with a tendril ornament. Research traditionally dates belt mounts with a lily motif to the end of the Avar Period.³⁷

Although most such items were in use in the Late Avar Period, the lathed bone needle case found in a grave at Tatárszentgyörgy is unsuitable for more precise dating.³⁸ The Vösendorf assemblage also contained a lathed needle case with a diagonal lattice pattern. Recent research shows that this

34 ČILINSKÁ 1975, 90.

35 SZŐKE 1992, 867–868.

36 BREUER 2005, 95.

37 See SZENTHE 2020, 433–437, with further literature.

38 SZENTHE – GÁLL 2022, 207–209.

object type was widespread in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The main time of its use was the second half of the 8th and the 9th century.³⁹

Grave 231 of Szebény, Cemetery I contained a yellow pottery mug. Based on Katalin Bognár's research, yellow pottery in the Carpathian Basin appeared at the turn of the 7th–8th centuries, became popular in the second half of the 8th century, and was still produced at the beginning of the 9th century.⁴⁰ Based on an oval hoop earring in the assemblage, the mug in the Szebény grave can also be dated to this period.

In summary, the box-shaped cloak clasp found at Dunapataj is one of the earliest of its kind, dated to the second half of the 8th century based on decoration and technological features. Based on accompanying finds, other known specimens can be dated to the end of the century and possibly also to the first decades of the 9th century.

Wearing style

There is fairly accurate information about the relative positions of twenty cloak clasps from graves. Four have been found 'around the neck' (three by early excavations) and two others 'under the jaw'. The pair of box-shaped cloak clasps in the disturbed Grave 81 of Komárno-Lodenice were found in the place of the chest. Such items were discovered in eleven cases left of the skull, the left shoulder, or the left clavicle (Fig. 9), with only two having been discovered on the right side. Based on that, the clasps were likely worn more or less uniformly.

Brooches appeared sporadically in the territory of the Avar Khaganate in the 7th century; most were worn at the middle of the chest, while bow brooches appeared in pairs on both shoulders. Despite that, Éva Garam connected the wearing of cloak clasps and brooches.⁴¹ From the second half of the 8th century, brooches came back into fashion in the areas west of the Avar Khaganate, likely due to an influence of Carolingian fashion.⁴² Most pieces were found in Carinthia,⁴³ and a few were scattered in the territories of Moravia and Croatia.⁴⁴ The so-called Gusen–Auhof group (described by Béla Miklós Szőke), characterised by the joint presence of Western (Slavic?) and Avar burial customs and elements of material culture, emerged in the Upper Austrian section of the Danube Valley. The graves



Fig. 9. Cloak clasp from Podunajské Biskupice (after HORŇÁK – STEHLÍKOVÁ 2017).

39 SZENTHE – GÁLL 2022, 211–219.

40 BOGNÁR 2023, 435.

41 GARAM 2003.

42 MACHÁČEK 2017; CHORVÁTOVÁ 2023, 196–197.

43 EICHERT 2010, 75–91.

44 PETRINEC 2009, 166–168; CHORVÁTOVÁ 2023, 102.

of this cultural unit contain both cross and disc brooches.⁴⁵ Due to the large number of stray finds and assemblages published without a proper grave description, we have little information about the wearing style of these jewellery items in the areas neighbouring the Avar Khaganate in the west. In the coeval Carolingian Empire, an odd number of brooches were worn on the chest.⁴⁶

Concerning wearing style, Grave 162 at Gusen-Berglitzl is a good analogy to the one at Dunapataj: the ring brooch it contained was found on the left shoulder, in a position akin to box-shaped cloak clasps'. However, an important difference is that the deceased person in this grave was a mature man.⁴⁷

Summary

As mentioned at the paper's beginning, box-shaped cloak clasp finds are relatively few but represent a well-researched Late Avar Period jewellery type. One of the very first cloak clasps in the Carpathian Basin may have been from the one found at Dunapataj and dated to the second half of the 8th century; however, its dating remains uncertain due to the unknown find context. Most specimens of the type can be dated to the second half of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century, representing the latest find horizon of the Avar Period. All pieces but the gold ones from Dunapataj and Budapest-Rákos were made of bronze or tin, and their surface was often gilded. Their cover plate and sides were often adorned with floral patterns typical of the period.⁴⁸ Three main variants can be distinguished within the type based on form and decoration, and the third can be divided into further subvariants.

The distribution of box-shaped cloak clasps is extremely interesting. Their highest concentration, practically identical to Workshop Circle No. 10 defined by Peter Stadler from Late Avar large strap end types, can be observed in the vicinity of Bratislava, the Little Hungarian Plain, and the Vienna Basin.⁴⁹ The 'route' outlined by other specimens follows the Danube to the area of Vác, reaches the Tisza at the edge of the Pest Plain, then the former bed of the Maros at Orosháza; the easternmost specimens are known from Ártánd. Another direction of spread can be observed south of Vác, along the Danube (e.g., Dunapataj, Gerjen) and a little further from the river (Kecel, Szebény). The Danube Valley may have been an important trade route during the Avar Period, although that can only be inferred from the distribution of some artefact types.⁵⁰ In this respect, the river section from the Danube bend through the Pest Plain to the confluence of the Körös and Tisza rivers is distinguished by the presence of lathed needle cases and cloak clasps.⁵¹ The former Maros bed called Száraz-ér today could also be a means of long-distance trade between east and west in the early Middle Ages, as indicated by the raw material of the grindstones on Orosháza, Site 13.⁵²

Each appearing box-shaped cloak clasp variant can be linked to a limited region: rectangular pieces occur east of the Danube, while all but one round piece was found west of the river. All but one oval cloak clasp variants are strongly associated with the western border areas of the Khaganate; only

45 SZŐKE 2021, 456–457.

46 SPIONG 2000, 151–152; WAMERS 2011, 189.

47 See TOVORNIK 1985, 179, Taf. 28. Only women wore brooches in the internal parts of the Carolingian Empire (SPIONG 2000, 151).

48 SZENTHE 2020, 304–305.

49 STADLER 1990, 309.

50 Szabolcs Felföldi distinguished between trade on rivers and in river valleys (FELFÖLDI 2019, 356). We have no evidence of river navigation from the Avar Period.

51 SZENTHE – GÁLL 2021, 360.

52 RÓZSA *et al.* 2013.

one or two came from the Great Hungarian Plain. All that indicates that it is unlikely that independent workshops producing such clasps operated far from each other, but the known specimens probably reached the lowland areas of the Khaganate through internal distribution systems.

Based on the box lid from Sorpe in Spain and the cloak clasps from Dunapataj and Zasavica, the first box-shaped cloak clasps likely came from the Mediterranean. Since similar items are not known from the territory of the Byzantine Empire, it cannot be excluded that the first pieces were made specifically on order for the Avar elite. The fact that the object type became popular in the western half of the Khaganate in the second half of the 8th century coincides with the spread of the fashion of wearing a brooch in the eastern region of the Carolingian Empire. However, based on available data, brooches were worn at the middle of the chest (and from the 8th century), while box-shaped cloak clasps are usually found around the left shoulder. Based on that, the two jewellery types cannot be seen as equals, and the spread of the latter can be traced back to internal processes. The difference in wearing style may also stem from dissimilar functions: Avar attire is traditionally reconstructed as including a kaftan, although the only direct evidence is a few figural carvings.⁵³ Besides practical, box-shaped cloak clasps may have had a symbolic role: worn in a visible part of the costume, they could serve to express group identity,⁵⁴ emphasising the cohesion of the group and marking their distinctness from neighbouring groups,⁵⁵ particularly at the cultural frontiers. Since the importance of female representation had increased by the end of the Avar Period⁵⁶—when box-shaped cloak clasps were popular—this type of jewellery with its lavish design could play a role in the expression of group identity, marking the wearers' resistance to Carolingian influences on the western border of the Avar Khaganate.

Acknowledgements

We thank Csilla Balogh and Franz Sauer for sharing the information about the assemblages of Tatárszentgyörgy and Vösendorf finds with us. We are also grateful to Tivadar Vida for allowing us to use the unpublished drawings of the cloak clasps from Mosonszentjános. The paper was written as part of the project TKP2021-NKTA-24.

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53 Cp. BUGARSKI 2016, 87–88, Fig. 2. The depiction shows the figure from the profile and holds no information on whether these caftans are closed in the middle or on a side. Only in the latter case could the box-shaped cloak clasps have been used to fasten them.

54 WOBST 1977.

55 BARTH 1969.

56 See SZENTHE – GÁLL 2022, 314.

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Tab. 1. Basic information on the cloak clasps from the Carpathian Basin.

ID	Grave	Material	Type	Context	Way of wearing	Picture	Reference
1	Abony-Neppel F. telke, Grave 128	Bronze	I	Grave	“Around the neck”	Fig. 2.1	ÉBER 1902, 258–260
2	Ártánd-Kapitánydűlő, Grave 108	Bronze	IIIc	Grave	Under the left side of the skull	Fig. 5.1	KRALOVÁNSZKY 1996, 49, 75, 12. kép 2–3
3	Ártánd-Kapitánydűlő, Grave 260	Bronze	IIIc	Grave	Under the left side of the skull	Fig. 5.4	KRALOVÁNSZKY 1996, 64, 84, 21. kép 2–3
4	Bruckneudorf, Grave 791	Bronze	IIIIf	Unpublished grave	No data	Fig. 6.3	SAUER 2013, 61
5	Budapest-Rákossziget, Ejtőernyőstorony, Grave 19	Gold	II	Grave	Disturbed grave	Fig. 3.3,5	NAGY 1998 (I), 71–72; NAGY 1998 (II), 67, Taf. 59.19:12
6	Cikó, Grave 532–533	Bronze	II	Grave	“Around the neck”	Fig. 3.2	KISS – SOMOGYI 1984, 63–64, 237, 35. tábla 532–533:3
7	Čunovo, Grave 61	Bronze	x	Grave	No data	Fig. 4.5	SÓTÉR 1895, 99, 101
8	Čunovo, Grave 111	Bronze	II	Grave	No data	Fig. 3.4	SÓTÉR 1895, 106–107
9	Dunapataj	Gold	I	Stray find	No data	Fig. 2.3	HAMPEL 1905 (I), 66; HAMPEL 1905 (II), 389–390; HAMPEL 1905 (III), Taf. 282; GARAM 1989
10	Gerjen, Grave 77	Bronze	IIIc	Grave	“Under the jaw”	Fig. 5.3	KISS – SOMOGYI 1984, 109, 250, 48. tábla 77:4–5
11	Gerjen (stray find)	Bronze	IIIb	Stray find	No data	Fig. 4.4	KISS – SOMOGYI 1984, 111, 252, 50. tábla X:1
12	Halimba-Belátódomb, Grave 173	Bronze	IIIc	Grave	Between the left shoulder and the jaw	Fig. 5.2	TÖRÖK 1998, 34, 185, Taf. 19.1–2
13	Kecel-Határdűlő, Grave 20	Bronze	x	Grave	On the outer side of the left shoulder	Fig. 4.7	Cs. Sós 1958, 7, VI.9
14	Komárno-Lodenice, Grave 81	Gilded bronze	IIIId	Grave	Disturbed grave – in the chest area	Fig. 5.8	TRUGLY 2008, 32, 185, 24. tábla 9–10

ID	Grave	Material	Type	Context	Way of wearing	Picture	Reference
15	Mosonszentjános, Grave 23	Gilded bronze	II	Grave	“Around the neck”	Fig. 3.6	HORVÁTH 2017, 9–10, 107, 7. tábla 9
16	Mosonszentjános, Grave 137	Bronze	IIIIf	Grave	“Around the neck”	Fig. 6.5	HORVÁTH 2017, 51, 213, 7. tábla 2
17	Mosonszentjános, Grave 140	Bronze	IIIle	Grave	One is at the pelvis, the other one is between the neck and the left shoulder	Fig. 6.1	HORVÁTH 2017, 52, 156, 56. tábla 3, 5, 213, 7. tábla 4
18	Mosonszentjános, Grave 215	Bronze	IIIle	Grave	On the right side of the chest	Fig. 6.2	HORVÁTH 2017, 77, 185, 83. tábla 5
19	Orosháza-Bónum-téglagyár, Grave 5	Bronze	IIIx	Grave	Disturbed grave – at the right femur	Fig. 4.6	JUHÁSZ 1995, 21, Taf. 1.5:2
20	Podunajské Biskupice (without grave number)	No data	IIIx	Unpublished grave	On the left side of the upper body	Fig. 9	HORŇÁK – STEHLÍKOVÁ 2017, without a page number
21	Szebény-I, Grave 138	Gilded bronze	IIIId	Grave	“Under the jaw”	Fig. 5.9	GARAM 1975, 82, 61, Fig. 10.138:6
22	Szebény-I, Grave 211	Bronze	IIIIf	Grave	On the left side of the jaw	Fig. 6.4	GARAM 1975, 86, 67, Fig. 16.211:3–4
23	Szebény-I, Grave 237	Bronze	II	Grave	On the left side of the jaw	Fig. 3.1	GARAM 1975, 87, 69, Fig. 18.237:2
24	Tatárszentgyörgy-Szabadrét-dűlő, Grave 24	Bronze	IIIla	Grave	At the left collarbone	Fig. 4.1	BALOGH 2013, 486. kép 10
25	Üllő-I, Grave 184	Gilded bronze	IIIId	Grave	At the right upper arm	Fig. 5.5	HORVÁTH 1935, 24, 26, 4. kép, 11. tábla 1–2
26	Üllő-I, Grave 201	Bronze	IIIId	Grave	Between the left collarbone and the jaw	Fig. 5.7	HORVÁTH 1935, 27, 11. tábla 5–6; 47. tábla 3–4

ID	Grave	Material	Type	Context	Way of wearing	Picture	Reference
27	Velký Meder, Grave 36	Bronze	IIIId	Grave	In the infill of the grave	Fig. 5.6	ZÁBOJNÍK – VARSÍK 2021, 29, 141, Tab. 27.38:8
28	Vösendorf-Laxenburgerstrasse, Grave 157	Gilded bronze	IIIb	Unpublished grave	Under the jaw and on the left shoulder	Fig. 4.2	SAUER 2007, 86; Personal comm. with F. Sauer
29	Wien-Csokorgasse, Grave 629	No data	IIIb	Unpublished grave	No data	Fig. 4.3	DAIM 1981, 189, Abb. 8.1
30	Zasavica	Gold	I	Stray find	No data	Fig. 2.2	POPOVIĆ 2005

Tab. 2. Datable finds from the examined assemblages.

	Earring with oval hoop and bead-shaped pendant	Earring with round hoop and bead-shaped pendant	Foiled segmented bead	Black bead with continuous wavy lines	Melon-seed-shaped beads	Mosaic-eyed bead	Ring with glass inlay	Bracelets with punched decoration	Belt fitting with tendril ornament	Belt fitting with „lily motif”	Leathe-turned needle case	Needle case with diagonal lattice pattern	Yellow pottery
Abony-Neppel F. telke, Grave 128			x										
Ártánd-Kapitánydűlő, Grave 108					x								
Ártánd-Kapitánydűlő, Grave 260	x		x										
Budapest-Rákos, Ejtő-ernyőstorony, Grave 19	x									x			
Cikó, Grave 532–533	x		x	x									
Čunovo, Grave 61	x				x								
Čunovo, Grave 111	x				x								
Gerjen, Grave 77	x				x								
Halimba-Belátódomb, Grave 173					x		x	x					
Kecel-Határdűlő, Grave 20	x		x										
Komárno-Lodenice, Grave 81			x										
Mosonszentjános, Grave 23					x				x				
Mosonszentjános, Grave 137	x				x			x		x			
Mosonszentjános, Grave 140	x				x								
Mosonszentjános, 215			x										
Orosháza-Bónum-téglagyár, Grave 5	x				x								
Podunajské Biskupice	x		x		x								
Szebény-I, Grave 138	x		x										
Szebény-I, Grave 211	x												
Szebény-I, Grave 237	x												x
Tatárszentgyörgy-Szabadrét-dűlő, Grave 24		x									x		
Üllő-I, Grave 184	x												
Üllő-I, Grave 201	x				x								
Velký Meder, Grave 36				x	x								
Vösendorf, Grave 157			x	x		x						x	