

## A VIEW FROM THE WEST TO THE EAST

### An Analysis of the Characteristics, Chronology, and Distribution of the Sabretache Plates in the 10th century

by

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#### 1. Introduction

In early medieval societies male violence has a complexity and a social-embedded nature. However, violence and the use of weapon were integral elements of masculine personal identity, particularly for elites. In these ways, weapons and related items became an integral part of commemorating personal and group identities. The symbolic significance and mnemonic, social-psychological impact of the ornamented belts, sabretache plates, and weaponry could also have derived from the rich and complex decorations applied to weaponry and related items (in this sense for example weaponry and other ornate items

from the rich graves from Rakamaz, Karos, Zemplin, etc.). These decorated weapons may have been powerful visual statements of identity.<sup>1</sup>

As part of the inventories of these rich graves, the sophisticated metalworks which are represented by the most sabretache plates which were regarded as genuine Hungarian products from the beginning of the 10th century for about 150 years.<sup>2</sup> Being one of the most iconic artefacts of the “funerary horizon”<sup>3</sup> of the Hungarian Conquest Period (10th century AD) in the Carpathian Basin, sabretaches and in particularly their decoration has been in constant attention of – especially Hungarian – archaeologists.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Karen Høilund Nielsen, *Animal Art and the Weapon Burial Rite – a Political Badge?* In: *Burial & Society. The chronological and Social analysis of Archaeological Burial Data*, eds Claus Kjeld Jensen/Karen Høilund Nielsen (Aarhus 1997) 129–148.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ancient Hungarians. Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. István Fodor (Budapest 1996) 49.

<sup>3</sup> Burial customs are considered the most important elements in the definition of the 10th century Hungarian cultural “horizon”, cultural “conglomeration”. However, we would like to mention, that instead of the outdated notion of “archaeological culture” (for a pertinent critical analysis see Sebastian Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie. Geschichte, Grundlagen und Alternativen. Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Ergänzungsband 42* [Berlin, New York 2004] 517–567) we opted for the term “funerary horizon” as this concept is limited to the precise chronological dating in the context of a geographical region (either micro- or macro-region).

<sup>4</sup> Nándor Fettich, *A honfoglaló magyarság fémművessége / Die Metallkunst der landnehmenden Ungarn. Archaeologia Hungarica. Magyar Történeti Múzeum 21* (Budapest 1937); Nándor Fettich, *Die altungarische Kunst* (Berlin 1942); István Dienes, *Honfoglalás kori tarsolyainkról. Folia Archaeologica. A Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Évkönyve. Annales Musei Nationalis Hungarici 16*, 1964, 79–112; László Révész, *A karosi honfoglaláskori temető. Régészeti adatok a Felső-Tisza vidék X. századi történetéhez. Magyarország honfoglalás kori és kora Árpád-kori sírleletei 1* (Miskolc 1996) 144–153; Ágnes Füredi, *Honfoglalás*

As appreciated by László Révész, these products – among other artefacts as weapon belt, ornate sabres, bow cases, sabretache plates – are considered “insignia of rank” of the Hungarian conqueror elites.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. The comparative Analysis of the Characteristics of Sabretache Plates

The research of the sabretache plates in the 10th century has hitherto mainly focused on the *repoussé* ornaments decorating the sabretaches, more precisely the decoration technique, the motifs employed (concentric circles, palmette motifs, zoomorphic, and cruciform motifs, etc.), without however attempting a comparative analysis of the structure of the finds. For this reason, the present paper sets out to analyse the functional and decorative characteristics by taking into account all known instances of such artefacts discovered so far.

As part of the present investigation we attempted to systematize the characteristics inherent to this category of finds (Fig. 1).

The observations based on the comparative analysis of the aforementioned artefacts are multi-dimensional:

1. The number of the undecorated sabretache plates is quite high in the Carpathian Basin and Scandinavia (12 finds), on the other side all known sabretache plates discovered in Eastern Europe with the notable exception of the find from Andreyevskaya shhel were decorated with floral and zoomorphic motifs.
2. Somewhat conspicuously the presence of the floral compositions based on palmette motifs characteristic to Islamic art is almost ubiquitous in the Carpathian Basin,<sup>6</sup> and hitherto unknown among the finds from Eastern Europe (see Fig. 1 and List). It is however important to underline that this situation is determined by the state of

the research, a fact overlooked by the researchers previously dealing with this question.

3. The rectangular openwork had the role of fastening the sabretache plate: the belt fragment preserved for example on the find from Andreyevskaya shhel illustrates the fastening mechanism and the way it was mounted on the external surface of the sabretache. Furthermore, the central fitting possibly combined with a thin ring which did not survive composed the closing mechanism of the item. Without a doubt this fastening mechanism is similar with that employed in the case of the sabretaches decorated with fittings. The intact find from Martan Ču provides an almost identical analogy.
4. Analysing the 38 finds hitherto known, their fastening and closing structures can be grouped into two categories, the first one displaying structural ties with the sabretache decorated with fittings (Fig. 2). The rectangular openwork in the central part of the sabretache plate is quite rare being one of the main connection points in functional terms with the sabretaches decorated with fittings, as their closing mechanism is identical. Similar openwork – apart from the three finds in the Mardjani collection, discovered in the Western Ural region – can be found on only one of the 27 finds from the Carpathian Basin, i. e. on the sabretache plate discovered in Bana. Thus, it can be said that very few of the sabretaches decorated with plates share the same – or similar – closing mechanisms as the so-called simple sabretaches, indicating that the high number of finds displaying an alternative closing mechanism in the Carpathian Basin (a total of 26 pieces) can be understood as a change (albeit not in an evolutionary sense) in the decoration and use of these implements. Furthermore, the macro-topography of their distribution is also interesting to note. As mentioned before, with the exception of the artefact from Bana – the only such discovery from the Carpathian Basin – all of the finds come from the steppe region of Southern Russia (the Mardjani collection) and Andreyevskaya shhel (Fig. 3). The explanation for the abandonment of the central openwork is quite straightforward and logical: the craftsmen who decorated the surface of the plates intended to protect the artefacts from subsequent interventions which threatened the integrity of the

lás kori tarsolylemez Pest megyében. A Bugyi-Felsőványi 2. sír. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 137, 2012, 221, 228–229, 12–14 Fig.; Ádám Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi Kárpát-medencében: formatörténeti tanulmányok a magyar honfoglalás kori díszítőművészethez* (Budapest 2015) 282–296, 306–313; Ágnes Füredi, *Tarsolyok. Rubicon történelmi folyóirat* 2016/7, 67–71.

<sup>5</sup> The Ancient Hungarians (Note 2), 48–49.

<sup>6</sup> Only the sabretache plate from Tiszabездé grave 8 was decorated with zoomorphic motifs. See the comprehensive analysis in Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), 429–502.

Morphological characteristics	Carpathian Basin	Northern Caucasus, steppe region	Volga Cama region	Scandinavia
undecorated surface of the plate	Besenyőtelek-Szörhát, Eperjeske gr. 2, Izsák-Balázspuszta, Karos-II gr. 52, Kenézlő-Fazekaszug-I gr. 3, 14, -II gr. 28, Perbete gr. 3, Tiszánána-Csehtanya gr. 1, Tuzsér-Boszorkányhegy gr. 6	Andreyevskaya shhel	–	Birka gr. 819 and 956
decorated surface of the plate	Floral motifs (Bana, „Báránd”, Bodrogvécs/Več, Bugyi-Felsővány gr. 2, Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza, Eperjeske gr. 2-3, Hlohovec/Galgóc, Karos-II gr. 29, Kenézlő-Fazekaszug-I gr. 14, Kiskunfélegyház-Radnóti Miklós street, Rakamaz-Strázsadomb gr. “A”, Szolnok-Strázsahalom, Svaláva/Szolyva, Tarcál-Rimai-dűlő gr. 4, Tiszabездéd gr. 8, Túrkeve-Ecsegpuszta), zoomorphic (Tiszabездéd gr. 8), cross (Tiszabездéd gr. 8)	Floral motifs: The Mardjani collection (2 artefacts); Zoomorphic motifs (2 artefacts)	Floral motifs (Kryukovo-Kuzhnoye grave 472, Panovo, Vesëlovo gr. 19), Zoomorphic motifs (Panovo, Perm, Vesëlovo gr. 19), Human motifs (Perm)	–
Rectangular openwork in the central part of the artefact	Bana	Andreyevskaya shhel, The Mardjani collection (3 artefacts)	–	–
Central fitting mounted on the openwork part	–	Andreyevskaya shhel	–	–
frame of the plate	Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza, Karos-II. gr. 29 and 52, Tarcál-Rimai dűlő gr. 4	–	Vesëlovo gr. 19	Birka gr. 819
Side fittings	Besenyőtelek-Szörhát, Kenézlő-Fazekaszug-I gr. 3, Svaláva/Szolyva	Andreyevskaya shhel	–	Birka M. 956
Central fittings with gemstone settings	–	Andreyevskaya shhel	–	–
Flattened rivets of rectangular plates	–	Andreyevskaya shhel	?*	–
Central fitting/central setting for gemstones	Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza, Túrkeve-Ecsegpuszta	–	–	–
Gemstone settings	Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza	–	–	–

\* The analysis of the backsides is yet to be carried out in the case of the artefacts from the Mardjani collection.

Fig. 1. Systematization and analytical comparison of the components of the sabretaches discovered in the Carpathian Basin, Scandinavia, in the regions of Cama and Volga, and the Northern Caucasus.

fragile decoration. In our view this is the best explanation for the fact that only five out of 38 analysed finds display openwork decoration.

5. However, the find from Andreyevskaya shhel, in Northern Caucasus, displays a further formal and functional trait which sets it apart from the sabretache plates and brings it closer to the simple sabretaches decorated with fittings: the rectangular plates and rivets on its backside which were used to fasten the fittings on the exterior. Such a fastening system was observed only in the case of the find from Martan Ču

Catcombe – grave 10. The backside of both artefacts displays the flattened rivets and rectangular plates which fastened the fittings on the front side of the artefacts (Fig. 4). As mentioned above, this decoration technique brings the piece from Andreyevskaya shhel closer to the simple sabretaches only decorated with fittings.

6. A further similarity with the simple sabretaches decorated with fittings lies in the fastening system, as shown by the examples from Martan-Ču Catcombe, grave 10, Kryukovo-Kuzhnoye, Karos-B. g. II, grave 41 (Fig. 5).

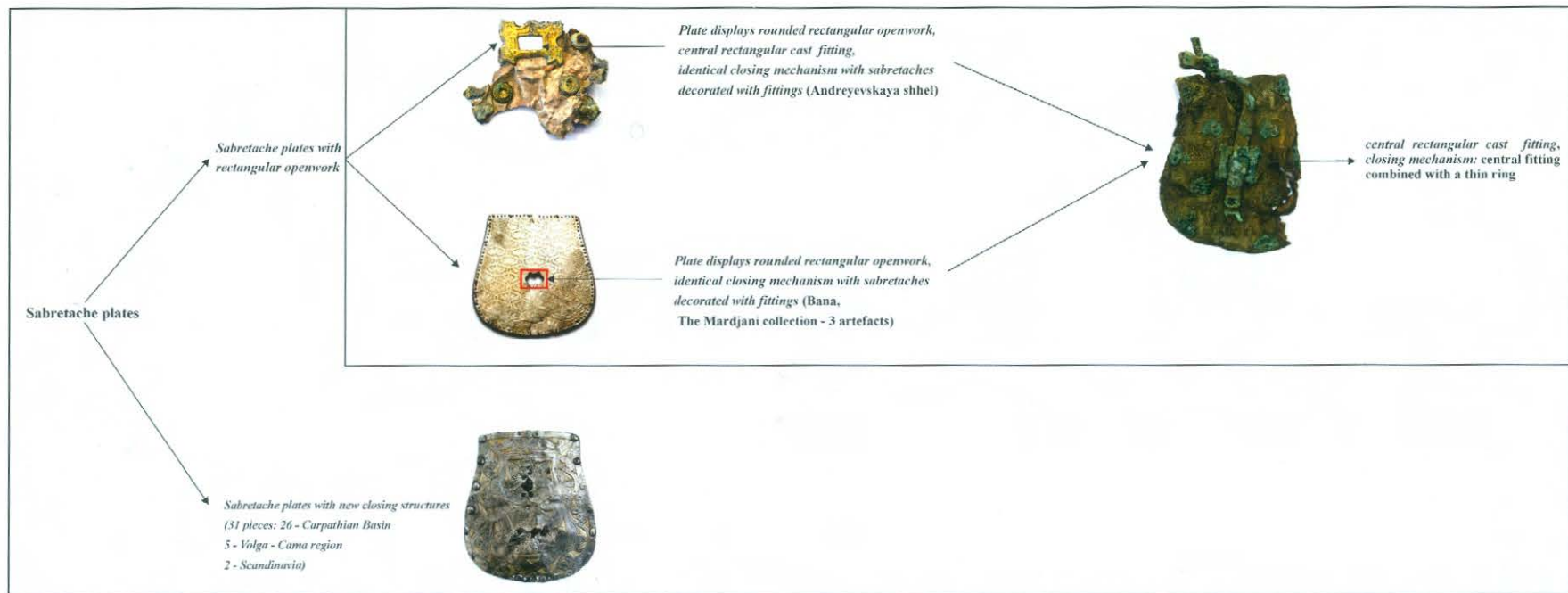


Fig. 2 Systematization of the closing mechanisms of the sabretache plates (The Ancient Hungarians [Note 2], 362 Fig. 1; Füredi, Honfoglalás kori tarsolylemez [Note 4], 13. kép; National Museum of Chechen Republic, Russian Federation, and Archaeological Museum "Gorgippia", photograph: Dávid Somfai Kara).



Fig. 3 The macroregional distribution of the sabretache plates with central openwork (based on: <https://maps-for-free.com/>).

7. One last formal characteristic worth mentioning involves the central fittings with mounted gemstones. The edge of the sabretache plate from Túrkeve-Ecsegpuszta (Fig. 6,1) was decorated with gemstones in four distinct places. In two cases the central parts were also decorated with gemstones (Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza, Túrkeve-Ecsegpuszta)<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 6,1–2; see List with afferent bibliography; Pl. 1,6).

### 3. The Chronology of the Sabretache Plates

One of the fundamental issues of every archaeological analysis is the assessment of the chronology of the contexts and finds. Out of the 38 known sabretaches only 22 come from documented archaeological contexts,<sup>8</sup> while 17 out of the 22 finds were

discovered in the Carpathian Basin, three in Eastern Europe in the Cama-Volga region and further two in Scandinavia.

#### 3. 1. The Carpathian Basin

Given that the state of research concerning the issue at hand is by far the most evolved in this macro-region, the complex chronological analysis will be limited to the finds from the Carpathian Basin.

##### 3. 1. 1. Seriation

Based on the mathematical-statistical method involving the analysis of correspondences between finds carried out with the help of the *PAST* software, all in all 16 burials with sabretaches could be analysed, accounting for 44.73 % percent of all sabretaches known today, i.e. 38 finds. Only a limited part of the burials featuring sabretaches discovered in the Carpathian Basin could be integrated into the said analysis, moreover the Scandinavian and Eastern finds – due to their low numbers – could not be subjected to such an investigation. The result of

<sup>7</sup> Gemstones were mounted on a wide range of artefacts during the 10th century AD. For an analysis of this issue see Cíprián Horváth, *Adatok a honfoglalás kori kő- és üvegbetéttel díszített fegyverek, tarsolyok és veretek kérdésköréhez. Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae* 2004, 151–171.

<sup>8</sup> The list of the burials: 1 Bana; 2 Bugyi-Felsővány grave 2; 3–4 Eperjeske graves 2–3; 5 Izsák-Balázspuszta; 6–7 Karos-Bg. II graves 29 and 52; 8–10 Kenézlő-Fazekaszug B.g. I graves 3 and 14; B.g. II grave 28; 11 Kiskunfélegyháza-Radnóti Miklós Street; 12 Szolyva/Svaláva; 13 Tarczal-Rímai dűlő grave 4; 14 Tiszabездé-Harangláb dűlő grave 8; 15 Tiszaeszlár-Bashalom B.g. I grave

D; 16 Tiszanána-Cseh tanya grave 1; 17 Tuzsér-Boszorkányhegy grave 6; 18 Krjukovo-Kužnoje grave 472; 19 Panovo grave 2; 25 Ruszenyiha (Rusenikha); 20 Vesëlovo (near Semënov) grave 19; 21–22 Birka graves 644 and 819.

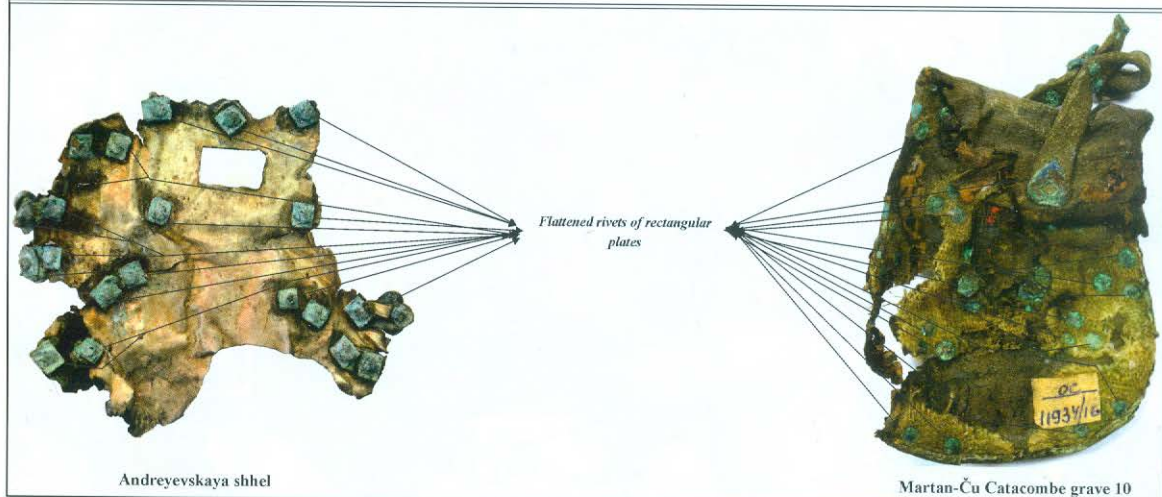


Fig. 4 The position of the rectangular plates and the flattened rivets on the surface of the backside of the sabretache plate from Andreyevskaya shhel and the sabretache decorated with fittings from Martan-Ču Catacombe grave 10 (Archaeological Museum “Gorgippia” from Anapa; National Museum of Chechen Republic, Russia Federation, photograph: Dávid Somfai Kara).

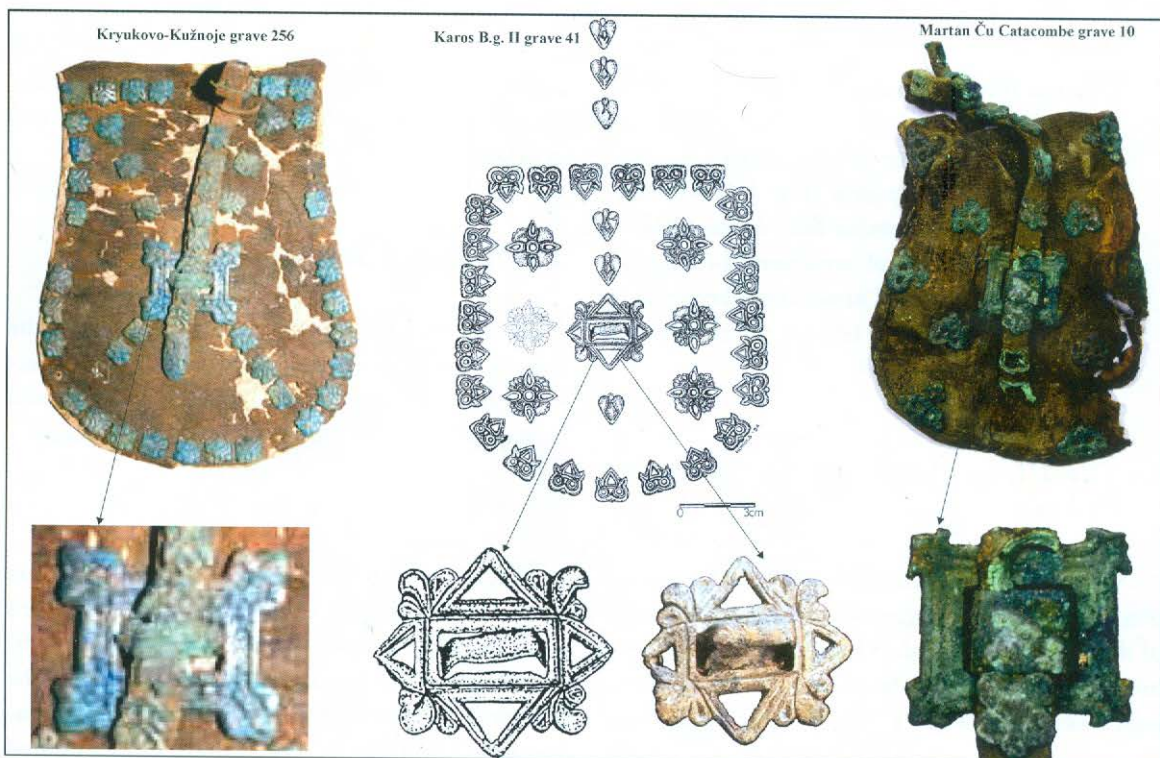


Fig. 5 Sabretaches decorated with fittings (Krylaszova/Belavin/Türk, Újabb adatok [Note 8], 11. kép 1; Révész, A karosi honfoglaláskori temetők [Note 4], 56 Pl.; National Museum of the Chechen Republic, Russia Federation, photograph: Dávid Somfai Kara).

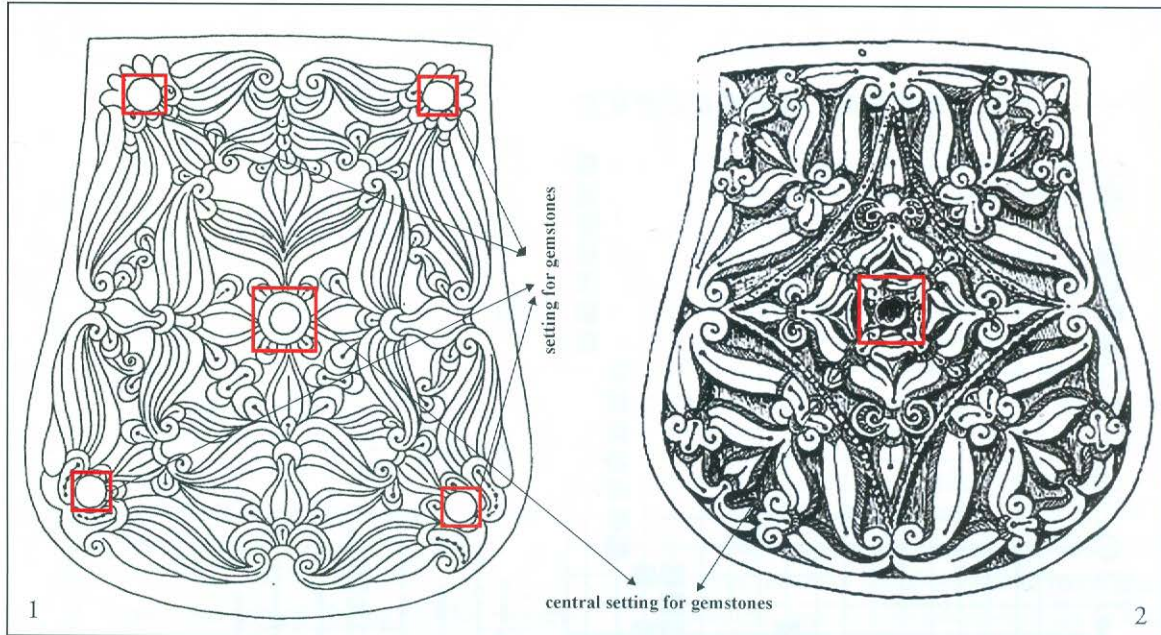


Fig. 6 The sabretache plates from Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza (2) and Túrkeve-Ecsegpuszta (1) (redrawn after *The Ancient Hungarians* [Note 2] 297 Fig.).

the analysis involving the aforementioned 16 burials can be illustrated as such (Fig. 7).

As shown by the seriation table, the chronological assessment of the finds is relatively accurate in cases in which coins are also featured among the grave goods. The four phases involved in the creation of the numismatic record (emission, circulation, acquirement, and deposition) indicate that the timespan between the release of a coin and the moment when that coin is regularly placed in a burial amount to at least ten years. Along these lines grave 52 from Karos-Burial ground II (the first entry in the table) containing the remains of a 41–60 years old man, can presumably be dated based on the coin finds (emitted between: 899–911 and 904–905) to around 920.<sup>9</sup> Grave 14 of the Kenézlő-Fazekaszug burial ground I yielded dirhams emitted by Samanid Emir Ismail ibn Ahmad (H279–295/892–907) at Al-Sas between H290 = 902/903 and H291 = 903/904, and by Nasr ibn Ahmad Samanid Emir (H301–331/914–943) in Andaraba in H309 = 921/922, as well as a Dirham with uncertain emitent dated to H320–330 = 932–941/942. Consequently, this burial as well a grave 11<sup>10</sup> from burial

ground I at Kenézlő can be dated to the mid- or second third of the century. A similar assessment can be made in the case of the possible lone grave from Kiskunfélegyháza-Radnóti Miklós Street: the numismatic evidence consisting of 39 pierced coins indicates that the date of the burial can be set around the 930s–940s. The assemblage consists of 5 denarii emitted by Emperor and King Charles (II and III) the Fat (881–, 885–887) in Toulouse, 2 denarii emitted by Odo King of Frankia (888–898), 2 denarii emitted in Milan and Pavia by Berengar I of Italy (888–915), 4 denarii emitted in Pavia by Rudolf of Burgundy, King of Italy (922–926), and lastly 22 denarii emitted by William (Guillaume) II of Auvergne (918–926) in Brioude. The basis for the later dating is provided by the so-called pear-shaped stirrup, which in reality is of the trapezoid type and is conventionally dated to the latter half of the 10th century.<sup>11</sup>

*Fontes Archaeologici Hungariae* 19 (Budapest 1989) 35–36 LIIa.

<sup>11</sup> László Kovács, Über einige Steigbügeltypen der Landnahmezeit. *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38, 1986, 195–225; Erwin Gáll, An attempt to classify the stirrups dating from the 10th century and the first quarter of the 11th century in the Transylvanian Basin, the Crişana/Partium and the Banat with an outlook to the Carpathian Basin. In: *Warriors, weapons, and harness from the 5th–10th centuries in the Carpathian*, ed. Călin Cosma. *Interferențe etnice și culturale în milenii I A. Chr.–I P. Chr.* 22 (Cluj-Napoca 2015) 373–377, Pl. 2.

<sup>9</sup> According to László Kovács, *A magyar kalandozások zsákmányáról* (Budapest 2011) 50, a later dating around the 930s is also viable.

<sup>10</sup> László Kovács, *Münzen aus der ungarischen Landnahmezeit*.

		Horse burials	Age and sex of the skeletons (M - male)	
Karos-B.g. II/gr. 52				M, 41–60
Eperjeske gr. 2				X
Eperjeske gr. 3				X
Karos-B.g. II/gr. 29				M, 40–40
Bugyi-Felsővány gr. 2				M, 30–35
Izsák-Balázspuszta				M, 18–20
Tarcal-Rimai dűlő gr. 4				
Tuzsér-Boszorkányhegy gr. J6				X
Kenézlő-Fazekaszug B.g. II/gr. 28				
Tiszanána-Cseh tanya gr. 1				M, 12–14
Bana gr. 1				
Svajlva/Szolyva				M, young?
Tiszaeszlár-Bashalom B.g. I/gr. D				
Tiszabездéd-Harangláb dűlő gr. 8				
Kenézlő-Fazekaszug B.g. I/gr. 14				
Kiskunfélegyháza-Radnóti Miklós str.				M, adult

- sabretache

- dirhem minted by Iama'ül ibn Ahmad in 902–903

- dirhem minted by Iama'ül ibn Ahmad in 903–904

- dirhem minted by Iama'ül ibn Ahmad in 904–905

- dirhem minted by Nasr II in 918–919

- dirhem minted by Nasr II in 920–921

- dirhem (unknown the issuing ruler)

- dirhem (unknown the issuing ruler)

- coin minted by Louis III

- coin minted by Berengar I (King of Italy)

- coin minted by Louis IV the Child

- coin minted by Berengar I (Holy Roman Emperor)

- coin minted by Rudolf (922–926)

- coin minted by unknown western-european coins

- band fingerring

- bezelied fingerring

- curved wire bracelet

- band bracelet

- beads/string of beads

- button

- belt with mounts

- plate on the dress

- footring

- bow case decorated with mounts

- bow

- sabre with (gilded) silver fittings

- sabre

- quiver

- arrowhead

- axe

- horse bit

- horse bit with sidebars

- harness mounts

- pear-shaped stirrup/stirrups

- Stirrup with 'forked arches' (Carolingian-Norman variety)

- trapezoid-shaped stirrup

- ornamented saddle

- girth buckle

- flint

- knife

- strike-a-light

- hollow hatchet

- scythe-stone

- pottery

Fig. 7 The seriation and systematisation table of the sabretaches in the Carpathian Basin.



The assemblages featured in the first and last rows of the seriation table indicate the earliest and the latest known examples of burials with sabretaches. The timespan separating the two ranges between three and six decades. Consequently, if the earliest burial, i.e. the grave from Karos is dated to 920/930, while the burial at Kiskunfélegyháza is considered to be the latest on account of the trapezoidal stirrup, than we can assert that the period of use of this item lasted for c. 50–60 years around 920/930–960/970/980.

The remaining funerary assemblages in the table reflect a quite unitary picture in terms of dress implements and grave goods which hinders any possibility of a more refined seriation dating within the aforementioned period.

### 3. 1. 2. Typo-chronological Dating of 10th century Artefacts

The relative dating of the burials with sabretaches (some of them only partially documented) based on the typo-chronological system devised for 10th century finds and the evidence of coins is possible at least in part.

1. In the case of grave 2 at Bugyi-Felsővány, which benefited from an exemplary documentation, the four-lobed dotted circular motif found on the grip plate of the artefact are known exclusively in contexts dated to the latter part of the 10th century.<sup>12</sup>
2. With regard to the burial ground at Eperjeske, only a total of eight graves were researched, probably accounting for only a small proportion of the burial ground, the finds yielding a surprising uniformity. The burials with sabretaches reflect a high degree of similarity with grave no. 52 at Karos-B.gr. II, indicating an analogous dating, corroborated by the seriation analysis as well.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to this Füredi mentioned further 16 graves with very poor inventory (simple open loops, strap rings, bronze wire bracelets, as well as on example of a poorly worked stirrup with precious metal inclusions). It is uncertain whether the burial ground was entirely excavated or not (Füredi, *Honfoglalás kori tarsolytárolók* [Note 4], 212). For the question of the dotted circle decoration see Béla Kürti *Egy honfoglalás kori tárgy eredetéhez. Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae* 1996, 151–163; Erwin Gáll, *Az Erdélyi-medence, a Partium és a Bánság 10–11. századi temetői. Magyarország honfoglalás kori és kora Árpád-kori sírleletei* 6 (Szeged 2013) Vol. I, 364, note 427. Based on the aforementioned finds, the respective graves can be clearly dated to the latter half of the 10th century.

3. Grave no. 8 of the burial ground at Tiszabездé which yielded a unique sabretache plate can be considered to be among the earliest graves of the funerary site according to its position within the necropolis, which however cannot be dated before the second third of the of the 10th century.<sup>13</sup>
4. Among the surviving parts of the assemblage from Hlohovec/Galgóc, besides the sabretache plate we can find the Volga Bulgarian “pseudo-Samanid” copies of a dirham emitted by Nasr ibn Ahmad Samanid emir (H 301–331/914–943) in Samarkand in H 306 = 918/919. Based on this find, the burial can only be dated after the first third of the 10th century.
- 5–7. According to the typo-chronological analysis of the finds the small burial ground at Tarcál comprising four burials with sabretaches can be dated to the first part of the 10th century. The burial grounds at Bana and Svaláva/Szolyva can also be dated to the first part of the 10th century.
8. The burial from Bodrogvécs/Somotor-Več containing the remains of a man, together with sword displaying a sabre-like hilt and a sabretache, according to the typo-chronological analysis can be clearly dated to the latter part of the 10th century.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. 1. 3. The internal Chronology of Burial Grounds with Sabretache Burials and the Dating of the Graves

Given the uniformity of the assemblages already discussed above, additional chronological information can only be obtained within the framework of the respective burial grounds. The conditions for this assessment exist in 21 cases out of total of 26 sabretache burials in the Carpathian Basin.

1. The Kenézlő-Fazekaszug burial ground II is clearly earlier than burials belonging to the Kenézlő-Fazekaszug I. This fact is corroborated by

<sup>13</sup> László Révész, *A bezdédi honfoglalás kori temető. Egy régészeti fikció nyomában*. In: Eszter Istvánovits, *A Rétköz honfoglalás és kora Árpád-kori emlékanyaga. Régészeti gyűjtemények Nyíregyházán 2/Magyarország honfoglalás kori és kora Árpád-kori sírleletei* 4 (Nyíregyháza 2003) 440.

<sup>14</sup> With regard to the dating of the sword with sabre-like hilt see: László Kovács, *Szablya–kard fegyverváltás. A kétélű kardos 10–11. századi magyar sírok keltezéséhez. Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 117, 1990, 39–49.

the seriation analysis of grave no. 14 belonging to burial ground no. I,<sup>15</sup> and grave no. 28 of burial ground II.

2. Grave A of the Rakamaz-Strázsadomb – according to the reconstructed plan of the burial ground – was identified in the immediate vicinity of grave C which yielded a double-edged sword with sabre-like hilt. The respective finds are generally dated to the latter part of the century.<sup>16</sup>
3. Grave no. 1 from Tizsanána according to the plan of the burial ground appears to belong to a different group as the one represented by graves 4 and 21 which comprised 10th century coins. Given that the coiled lockring emerged in the southernmost group (grave no. 11),<sup>17</sup> thus dating this part of the necropolis to the latter part of the century, it seems that the chronological evolution of the burial ground followed a N→S direction. Accordingly, the sabretache burial can be dated in our view to the second third of the 10th century.<sup>18</sup>
4. With regard to the remaining cases of sabretache burials the burial ground plans either do not reveal any chronological data, or they are simply not available:
  - 4.1. The dating of the burial ground at Tuzsér – especially grave J6 – cannot be refined beyond the timespan of the first two thirds of the 10th century.<sup>19</sup>
  - 4.2. The chronology of grave D from the Tiszaesz-lár-Bashalom I burial ground is uncertain, however grave F = 13 located in the immediate vicinity yielded denarii emitted by emperor Louis the Pious (814–840) in Bourges, by Odo king of Francia (888–898) in Limoges, and most importantly by Lothar king of Italy (947–950)

<sup>15</sup> Given that grave no. 3 of the burial ground was destroyed, it could not be included in the current analysis.

<sup>16</sup> Kovács, Szablya-kard fegyverváltás (Note 15), 39–49.

<sup>17</sup> According to the regional differences, several assertions regarding the dating of this artefact were hitherto put forward, see: Gábor Lőrinczy, Szegvár-Szölökajla X. századi temetője. *Communications Archaeologicae Hungariae* 1985, 157; László Révész, Heves megye 10–11. századi temetői. Magyarország honfoglalás kori és kora Árpád-kori sírleletei 5 (Budapest 2008) 402–403; Gáll, Az Erdélyi-medence (Note 13), Vol. I, 658.

<sup>18</sup> Révész, Heves megye 10–11. századi temetői (Note 18), 309.

<sup>19</sup> László Révész, Hitelesítő ásatás a tuzséri honfoglalás kori temető területén. A nyíregyházi Jósza András Múzeum Évkönyve 42, 2000, 7–32.

in Verona. This indicates that the respective sabretache grave cannot be extracted from the general chronology of the burial ground, and thus can be dated to the interval between the third of the 10th century and the latter half of the century.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. 1. 4. The Dating of the Artefacts based on the Traces of Wear and Tear

1. Traces of wear and tear are clearly visible on the sabretache plate discovered in the grave at Izsák-Balázspuszta, even so, according to the archaeologist who carried out the investigation the find is dated between the first third and the second quarter of the 10th century.<sup>21</sup>
2. The sabretache discovered in Bugyi-Felsőványi displays clear signs of wear and tear as well as traces of repair, which suggests a prolonged time of use.

Based on this four-tiered relative chronological system, the following chronological assertions can be put forward with regard to the finds of the Carpathian Basin:

1. None of analysed sabretache plates can be dated earlier than 925–930. Based on this assertion the following question arises: were these clothing implements already in use during the late-9th century Hungarian migration and conquest or, did their widespread use start only later?
2. The exact date when the latest sabretache plate entered into the archaeological record is uncertain, however the sword with sabre-like hilt (Bodrogvécs/Somotor-Več) and the trapezoidal stirrup (Kiskunfélegyháza-Radnóti Miklós Street) clearly indicates that these implements were still in use during the latter part of the century.
3. The age of the deceased in the case of the sabretache graves is extremely diverse (see Fig. 7), suggesting a high degree of chronological and spatial variety in the use of these implements.

<sup>20</sup> It is important to underline that analogies from the Caucasus of the belt decorated with fittings discovered in grave no. 9 are typically dated to the 11th century. For the respective fittings see: István Dienes, Un cimetière de Hongrois conquérants à Bashalom (Fouilles exécutées par L. Kiss). *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 7, 1956, LIX/1–50.

<sup>21</sup> Elvira H. Tóth, The Equestrian grave of Izsák-Balázspuszta from the Magyar Conquest. *Cumania* 4, 1976, 173, 183.

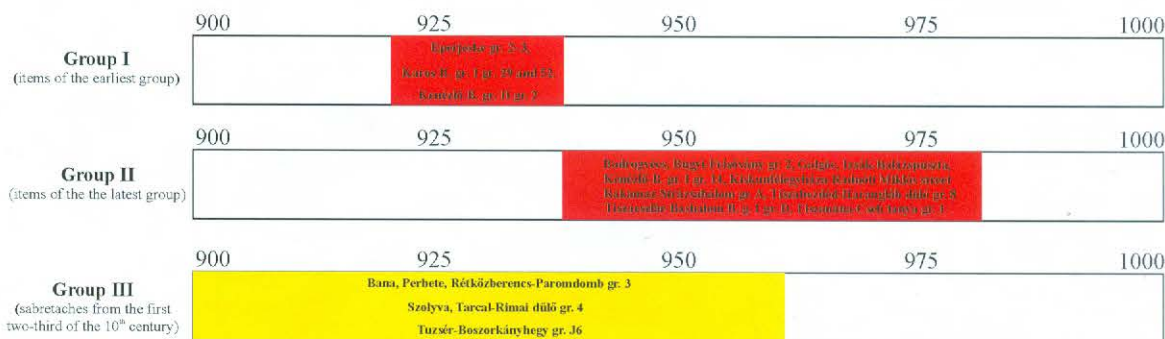


Fig. 8 The relative chronology of the sabretache plates in the Carpathian Basin during the 10th century.

- All in all the number of sabretache plates dated to the 920–930 period is lower than the amount of artefacts dated to the subsequent decades, suggesting that the general use of sabretaches reached its peak at a later date than suggested by previous authors, the second group being more numerous than the first one. In terms of dates this situation implies that the usage peak of this clothing implement can be placed in the period between 920/930 and 970/980, rather than 920/930–970/980 as suggested earlier.
- In the case of Bana, Perbete, Rétközberencs-Paromdomb grave 3, Svalôva/Szolôva-Rimai dűlő grave 4 and Tuzsér-Boszorkányhegy, only a loose dating to the first two thirds of the 10th century can be implied (Fig. 8).
- In macro-topographic terms – based on the relatively well-dated finds – currently the earliest instances come from the burial grounds situated in the Upper Tisa valley, however – as shown by the map below – an early dating can also be implied in the case of certain finds outside this geographical region, such as Bana and Perbete. Their distribution in the Carpathian Basin suggests a multi-levelled chronological process, however it is still open to debate whether this situation can be interpreted in terms of long distance commerce, or whether it is the result of the activity of local or foreign craftsmen<sup>22</sup> and their “apprentices”.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore it cannot be excluded that in fact we are dealing with the archaeological expression of

the sifting of the centre of political and military power from the Upper Tisa valley southward to the region between the Danube and the Tisa.<sup>24</sup> Moreover one can notice that the spatial distribution reflects the second network type defined and illustrated by Richard Hodges, i. e. the “solar system type”<sup>25</sup> (see Map 1–2, Fig. 9). This model emphasises upon the control of distribution, but we have to ask the question whether in this case we can discuss on the uncommercialised exchange or partially commercialised, noncompetitive exchange?

The chronology and the distribution of the sabretache plates is illustrated as follows (Fig. 9). Consequently, it can be said that the Upper Tisa region provided the earliest instances and the highest numbers of sabretache plates, just as in the case of dirham finds and weapons in funerary contexts (Map 3).<sup>26</sup>

### 3. 2. Eastern Europe and Scandinavia

The current section is an attempt to refine the chronology of the Eastern European and Scandinavian finds, notwithstanding the very low-resolution data available in this regard. With regard to the Scandina-

<sup>22</sup> Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), 587.

<sup>23</sup> Gergely Szenthe, Meister und ihre Kunden. Herstellung und Verbreitung gegossener Bronzegegenstände im spätawarenzeitlichen Karpatenbecken. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 137/1, 2012, 57–75.

<sup>24</sup> Livia Bende/Gábor Lőrinczy/Attila Türk, Honfoglalás kori temetkezés Kiskundorozsma-Hosszúháthalomról. *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve – Studia Archaeologica* 8, 2002, 376; Gábor Lőrinczy/Attila Türk 10. századi temető Szeged-Kiskundorozsma, Hosszúhátról. Újabb adatok a Maros-torkolat Duna–Tisza közti oldalának 10. századi településtörténetéhez. *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve – Studia Archaeologica* 12, 2011, 444.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics. A New Audit* (London 2012) 4 Fig. 2/B.

<sup>26</sup> Révész, A karosi honfoglaláskori temetők (Note 4), 79, 94, 113/2. kép; Gáll, An attempt to classify the stirrups (Note 12), Fig. 22.

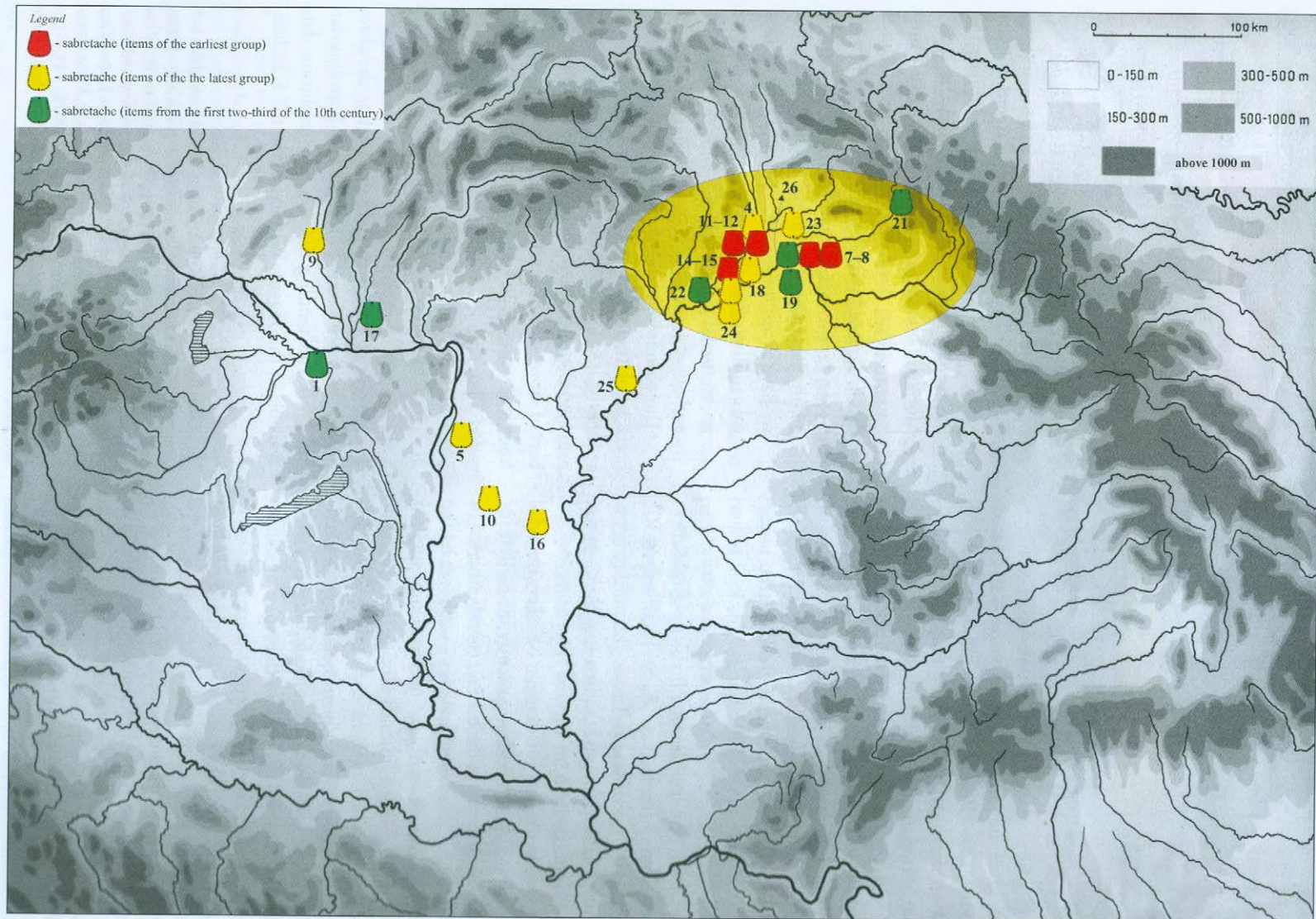


Fig. 9 The dating of the sabretache plates in the Carpathian Basin and their geographical distribution (for the numbering, see List 1).

vian finds it can be mentioned that the two sabretache plates discovered in the burial ground at Birka are analogous to the 10th century finds in the Carpathian Basin, furthermore the piece discovered in grave 644 is associated with a coin emitted by Nasr II Ibn Ahmad (914–943) in 920–921, thus dating the sabretache plate to the second third of the century.

The issue regarding the finds discovered on the territory of present-day Russia is somewhat more problematic. The decorated oriental sabretaches were previously considered by the Hungarian researchers as being the prototype of finds associated with the Hungarian Conquest Period, and thus earlier than the sabretaches from the Carpathian Basin, while the recent tendencies consider the two categories as being contemporaneous.<sup>27</sup> The precise dating of these finds is generally hindered by the lack of contextual data, five out of nine sabretaches are isolated finds (Andreyevskaya shhel, the Mardjani collection, Perm) and thus devoid of any archaeological context. Even so, the sabretache from Perm was dated to the latter part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century without any clear explanations.<sup>28</sup> Contextual data are available only in four cases (Kryukovo-Kuzhnoye grave 472, Panovo grave 2, Rusenikha grave 2, Vesëlovo [near Semënov] grave 19), however the respective information is not straightforward either. Only one of the graves produced a coin find (Vesëlovo grave 19), although unfortunately the dirham could not be identified. Even so, it is highly likely that we are dealing with a 10th century coin. Recently the assemblage was dated to the latter half of the 10th century.<sup>29</sup> The belt set from grave 2 of the Rusenikha burial ground has a close analogy in grave no. 3 which also produced a coin dating the burial to the early-10th century.<sup>30</sup> On the other side the

dating of grave 2 from Panovo to the latter half of the 10th century is unsubstantiated.<sup>31</sup> No additional data regarding the sabretache burial from Kryukovo-Kuzhnoye (grave 472) is available at this time.

In order to summarize, it can be said that the chronology of the Eastern European sabretache finds is highly problematic. Even so we can assert that at least a part of this group (Panovo grave 2, Rusenikha grave 2, Vesëlovo [near Semënov] grave 19) is contemporaneous or even later than the finds from the Carpathian Basin. Conversely, the early dating of the find from Rusenikha clearly indicates that their interpretation as imports from the Carpathian Basin (i. e. in a W → E direction) is not tenable.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore in light of the aforementioned find, it can be asserted that these implements have entered into usage in the eastern regions at an earlier date than the ones from the Carpathian Basin. Moreover, the gilded silver sabre-scabbard fittings with palmette decoration discovered around Krasnodar and almost identical with a number of finds from the Carpathian Basin, indicates that the palmette motif typical of the sabretache plates is not an indicator of Hungarian material culture, but rather an instance of 10th century international elite representation.

#### 4. The regional distribution of the sabretache plates (Map 1–2)

By following the macro-regional distribution of the sabretache plates across the Carpathian Basin, Scandinavia, and the Ural region, we are compelled to express a number of fundamental questions regarding the cause and character of the distribution. First of all, we need to address the supra-regional character of this artefact type, in order to understand the factors which promoted this clothing implement to the position of status marker for the elite throughout such

<sup>27</sup> István Fodor, *Az őscseremiszt tarsolylemez*. In: Ünnepi íráások Bereczki Gábor tiszteletére, szerk. András Bereczki/Márta Csepregi/László Klima. *Uralisztikai Tanulmányok 19* (Budapest 2010) 163–171.

<sup>28</sup> Natalja B. Krylaszova/Andrej M. Belavin/Attila Türk, *Újabb adatok a honfoglalás kori tarsolyok és tűzkészégek klasszifikációjához*. In: *Avarok Pusztái. Régészeti tanulmányok Lőrinczy Gábor 60. születésnapjára / Avarum Solitudines. Archaeological studies presented to Gábor Lőrinczy on his sixtieth birthday*, eds. Alexandra Anders/Csilla Balogh/Attila Türk. *Opitz Archaeologica 6 – MTA VTK MÖT Kiadványok 2* (Budapest 2014) 458.

<sup>29</sup> Krylaszova/Belavin/Türk, *Újabb adatok* (Note 29), 458.

<sup>30</sup> Татьяна Багшевна Никитина, *Поясные кошельки/сумочки в средневековых могильниках Веглужско-Вятского междуречья. Поволжская археология*. Издательство “Фэн” Академии наук Республики Татарстан 2, 2013, 153.

<sup>31</sup> “Regarding the dating of the sabretache plate from Panovo, based on the inventory of the respective grave (Fig. 8) – similarly to grave 19 of the burial ground at Veslovë – this assemblage cannot be dated before the latter half of the 10th century, corroborated by the surprisingly well-preserved belt fittings discovered here (Fig. 8/9–12)” (translated by the authors) Krylaszova/Belavin/Türk, *Újabb adatok* (Note 29), 458.

<sup>32</sup> This theory was partly devised by István Fodor (Fodor, *Az őscseremiszt tarsolylemez* [Note 28], 163–171). The possibility that we are dealing with imports from the Carpathian Basin has emerged previously in the archaeological literature. Владислав П. Даркевич, *Художественный металл Востока* (Москва 1976) 170.

Macro-region	funerary context	Emission and number of coins in ( )	Date of emission
Carpathian Basin	Hlohovec/Galgóc	Volga Bulgarian copy of a dirham emitted by Nasr II Ibn Ahmad (914–943): Samarqand (1)	H306 (918/9)
Carpathian Basin	Karos-II/M. 52	Isma'il ibn Ahmad(Samanid emir): Al-SasorBalkh (1)	H292 (904–905)
Carpathian Basin	Kenézlő-I/M. 14	A. Isma'il ibn Ahmad(Samanid emir): Al-Sas (1)	A. H290 (902–903)
		B. Isma'il ibn Ahmad(Samanid emir): Al-Sas (1)	B. H291 (903–904)
		C. dirham minted in Volga Bulgaria (1)	C.H320330
		D. Nasr II Ibn Ahmad (914–943)	(932–942)
		E. dirham preserved in two pieces, probably minted in Volga Bulgaria	D.H309(921–922)
			E. unknown
Carpathian Basin	Szolnok-Strázshalom	Volga Bulgarian copy of the dirham emitted by Nasr II Ibn Ahmad (914–943)	H308 (920–921)
Scandinavia	Birka M. 644	Nasr II Ibn Ahmad (914–943)	H308 (920–921)
Volga region	Vesělovo M. 19	Unidentified dirhams	unknown

Fig. 10 The list of dirhams found in graves which contain sabretache plates.

a vast territory. In this case we are also dealing with a methodological issue. Given the fact that the state of research is more advanced in the Carpathian Basin,<sup>33</sup> the distribution of these artefacts was interpreted in terms of cultural diffusion. Thus, according to this line of interpretation the production area was centred in the Middle Danube region, from where the artefacts spread to various areas of Eastern Europe.<sup>34</sup>

Analysing the associated inventories in funerary contexts from Scandinavia, Volga and the Cama region, steppe region, and the Carpathian Basin, a further cultural and economic link emerges between the respective macro-regions; i.e. the 10th century Arab dirhams.<sup>35</sup> The distribution of the said numismatic finds associated in funerary contexts with sabretache plates is illustrated in the table above (Fig. 10). According to the information available so far in all cases

we are dealing with coins emitted in the first half of the 10th century (see Fig. 11).

These items can be associated with long distance commerce. The existence of commercial networks starting from the 8th century and in the first half of the 10th century are proven by the large number of dirhams discovered (not exclusively in sabretache plate graves) in the vast area between the Caucasus and Scandinavia.<sup>36</sup> In every single case, finding places of sabretache plates are located in the vicinity of the great Eurasian commercial roads, which highlights further the “international” character of these clothing accessories. This situation can only be explained through the presence of Arabic political and economic factor, and its relations with Khazar, Pecheneg and Viking networks of power, representing the existence of a complex system of communication channels.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Until recently almost all of the known sabretache plates have been discovered in the Carpathian Basin. Recently however the emergence of four new cases has increased the number of finds known from Eastern Europe to nine, accounting for 33 % of the total of known sabretache plates. Consequently, the statistic distribution according to regions is as follows: Carpathian Basin 27, Eastern Europe 9, Scandinavia 2. For the research history of the 10th century see Péter Langó, *Archaeological Research on the Conquering Hungarians: a Review*. In: *Research on the prehistory of the Hungarians: a Review*, ed. Balázs Gusztáv Mende. *Varia Archaeologica Hungarica* 18 (Budapest 2005) 175–340.

<sup>34</sup> Г. А. Архипов, *Общие элементы материальной культуры марийцев и восточноевропейских кочевников*. In: *Congressus Nonus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum 4/II* (1975), red. Gyula Ortutay (Budapest 1980) 222; István Fodor, *A veszélovói tarsolylemez*. In: *A honfoglalás kor kutatásának legújabb eredményei. Tanulmányok Kovács László 70. születésnapjára*, szerk. László Révész, Mária Wolf. *Monográfiák a Szegedi Tudományegyetem Régészeti Tanszékéről* 3 (Szeged 2013) 466.

<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the total lack of Byzantine coins also has to be noted.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas S. Noonan, *The Islamic world, Russia and the Vikings, 750–900. The numismatic evidence*. *Variorum collected studies series 595* (Farnham 1998); id., *Volga Bulgaria's Tenth-Century Trade with Sāmānid Central Asia*. *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 11, 2000–2001, 140–218; Roman K. Kovalev, *Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dirhams of 837/838*. In: *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor 2005) 220–251; Roman K. Kovalev/Alexis C. Kaelin, *Circulation of Arab Silver in Medieval Afro-Eurasia. Preliminary Observations*. *History Compass*. Wiley-Blackwell (online) 5, 2007, 1–21; Christoph Kilger, *Kaupang from Afar: Aspects of the Interpretation of Dirham Finds in Northern and Eastern Europe between the Late 8th and Early 10th Centuries*. In: *Means of Exchange. Dealing with Silver in the Viking Age*, ed. Dagfinn Skre. *Kaupang Excavation Project Publ. Ser. 2 = Norske Oldfunn* 23 (Aarhus 2008) 199–252, 199–252; Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, *The Rus in Arabic Sources: Cultural Contacts and Identity*, PhD thesis (Bergen 2013) 33–41, 130–132.

<sup>37</sup> Szabolcs Polgár, *Kereskedelem a Fekete-tenger északi partvidékén a 9–10. században* (A Gayhán-féle leírás adatai a magyarok

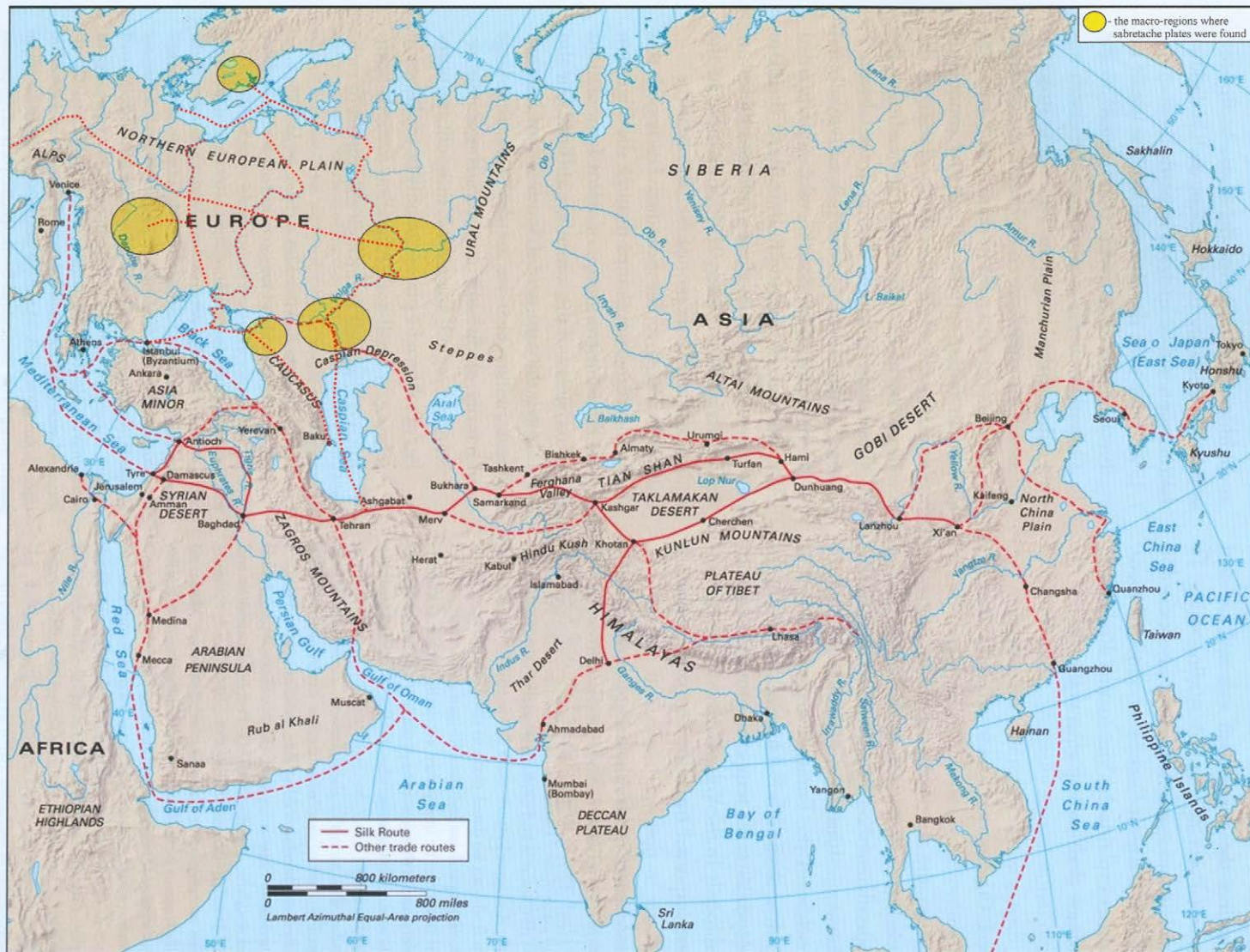


Fig. 11 The commercial routes during the early Middle Ages, the macro-regions where sabretache plates were found (based on: <https://io9.gizmodo.com/sogdia-the-lost-empire-that-ruled-the-silk-road-1553078058>; completed with the network of roads by Hrandal The Rus in Arabic Sources [Note 37], Fig. 5, 10, 18).

In the Carpathian Basin the emergence of dirhams can be traced from the 10th century.<sup>38</sup> This archaeological phenomenon can be ascribed to the intense commercial activity carried out on the Eurasian steppe in both a N–S and a W–E direction. This underlines the existence of a complex system of communication channels.<sup>39</sup> According to Fig. 11 the sabretache find spots are in every case located in the vicinity of the great Eurasian commercial roads, which further explains the “international” character of the of these clothing implements (Fig. 11).

## 5. Final Observations

Based on the data analysed so far, the main question is: how can one interpret the distribution of this specific method of sabretache decoration? The archaeological literature interpreted the use of the sabretache in the Eurasian steppe as a typical element of nomadic life.<sup>40</sup> However, according to the same specialists the respective artefacts were not produced locally in the Volga–Cama region, but instead were imported from the Carpathian Basin.<sup>41</sup>

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és a *De Administrando Imperio* értesülései a besenyők kereskedelméről). Heves Megyei Régészeti Közlemények 2, 2000, 193–204; Farda Asadov, Khazaria, Byzantium, and the Arab Caliphate: Struggle for control over Eurasian Trade Routes in the 9th–10th centuries. *The Caucasus and Globalization* 6/4, 2012, 144–149.

<sup>38</sup> Kovács, A magyar kalandozások (Note 10), 75–90. None of the dirham finds can be dated prior to the 10th century. Based on this archaeological reality, the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin can be interpreted according to a structuralist model understood as the western expansion of Oriental economic, political and military structures. Gáll, *Az Erdélyi-medence* (Note 13), Vol. I, 807.

<sup>39</sup> “The East was, as was England, Ireland, the Atlantic islands and Normandy, part of the Scandinavian world of the Viking Age”: Wladyslaw Duczko, *Viking Rus. Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe. The Northern World. North Europe and the Baltic c. 400–1700 AD. Peoples, Economies and Cultures* 12 (Leiden–Boston 2004) 258. „Bhulghar functioned as an eastern meeting point between north and east”: Marianne Vedeler, *Silk trade to Scandinavia in the Viking Age*. In: *Textiles and the medieval economy. Production, trade and consumption of textiles 8th–16th Centuries*, eds. Angela Ling Huang/Carsten Jahnke. *Ancient Textiles Series* 16 (Oxford, Philadelphia 2016) 82.

<sup>40</sup> For the issue of nomadism see: Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Madison 1994); Nikolay N. Kradin, *Nomads*. In: *The Encyclopedia of Empire* 2016, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Chichester 2016) 1–6. – <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118455074.wboe171/abstract?userIsAuthenticated=false&deniedAccessCustomisedMessage=>. Access January, 10th 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Архипов, *Общие элементы* (Note 35), 222; Fodor, *A veszelövői tarsolylemez* (Note 35), 466.

Needless to say this socio-historical model is rather simplistic as it excludes role of the Arab, Khazar and Rus Viking (*Rhos*) commercial networks of the 8–10th centuries, or the activity of the ambulant craftsmen who sometimes covered large areas.<sup>42</sup>

In the current stage of the research, in order to attempt to clarify the situation, each individual macro-region will be analysed in part:

1.1. We agree with the assertion that the use of sabretaches decorated with plates spread to the Carpathian Basin as a result of the macro-migration of the Hungarian/Turk power structure which prompted the emergence of the Oriental commercial structures in the region. Given that the migration of the Hungarian conquerors displays an E → W direction beginning in the region of the Eurasian steppe and ending in the Carpathian Basin, the fashion of the sabretaches decorated with plates inlaid with ornaments made of precious metal can be regarded as having a steppe origin. In this case the main question is: why do these artefacts only feature in burials dated after 925/930, mainly in the middle and latter part of the 10th century.

1.2. With regard to the Scandinavian region this fashion can be explained through the migration of certain micro-groups of oriental populations into the area of the settlement at Birka, but also through the commercial South to North transit route. Given that we are dealing with a large quantity of dirhams in a very thoroughly researched region, the almost insignificant number of sabretache plates can only be explained in terms of a small-scale migration towards Scandinavia,<sup>43</sup> as well as through the import of tech-

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<sup>42</sup> Szenthe, *Meister und ihre Kunde* (Note 24), 57–75.

<sup>43</sup> “Hägg, who considered the grave to be disturbed, did not observe the presence of eastern archer equipment, which in itself is an isolated phenomenon among the c. 100 weapon graves on Birka. It is possible that what we have here is a member of the *bird* who came from a different cultural background”; Fredrik Lundström/Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson/Lena Holmquist Olausson, *Eastern archery in Birka's garrison*. In: *The Martial Society. Aspects of warriors, fortifications and social change in Scandinavia*, eds. Lena Holmquist Olausson/Michael Olausson. *Archaeological Research Laboratory Stockholm University* (Stockholm 2009) 113. “That the Magyars constituted a major contributing factor is indicated by the specific parts of equipment and dress.” Charlotte Hedenstierna-Johnson, *Magyar – Rus' – Scandinavia. Cultural Exchange in the Early Medieval Period*. *Situne Dei* 2009. *Årsskrift för Sigtunaforskning* utgiven av Sigtuna Museum/Annual of Sigtuna Research published by Sigtuna Museum 2009, 53.



nology and fashion trends from the Eurasian steppe and the Arab world. The view held by Swedish researchers should be reassessed however, given that the ritual and composition of the graves with sabretache finds (644 and 819) indicates the adoption of a fashion trend (commercial relations) rather than the migration of individuals from the steppe or the Carpathian Basin to Scandinavia.<sup>44</sup>

1.3. With regard to the find from Andreyevskaya shhel its discovery in the pre-mountainous region of the northern Caucasus underlines the importance of the respective macro-region as a contact area between the steppe and the mountains, i.e. the meeting point of nomads and the population of the settlements<sup>45</sup> where the communication hubs towards the east, west, north and south facilitated not only the distribution of products, but also of technological know-how. The northern area of the “Silk road” reached the Taman peninsula,<sup>46</sup> while the South to North commercial route which started in the Near East (Baghdad) crossing the Caspian Sea and the Volga region (probably through the capital Itil) eventually reached Scandinavia.<sup>47</sup> The Caucasus stood out for its high quality metalworking as well as goldsmithing and silversmithing already since prehistoric times which together with its geographic position determined a constant series of military conflicts aimed at the control of the commercial routes,

the economic hubs,<sup>48</sup> and the mineral resources (copper, silver, iron, and salt).<sup>49</sup> This is the macro-regional geo-economic and geo-political context of the emergence of the sabretache plate at Andreyevskaya shhel.

1.4. The funerary discoveries concentrated in the region of the Cama and Volga Rivers reflect numerous flagrant differences which set them apart from the nomadic burials: especially the: a) total lack of any remains of horses, and b) the cenotaph type burials from Vesëlovo and Rusenikha. Virtually every burial from this macro-region comprises belt sets with fittings, indicating that this “international” fashion has also emerged in the area, – according to some opinions – arriving from the southern region of the Volga.<sup>50</sup> According to some authors such as B. N. Krylaszova, A. M. Belavin, and A. Türk, the spread of the silver artefacts into this region can be linked with the active involvement of the Volga Bulgarians in fur trade with the populations from the upper course of the Volga and Cama Rivers.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless the authors of the respective paper failed to take into consideration the fact that the region of the Caucasus with its rich mineral resources was home to the most important metalworking and goldsmithing centres starting with the prehistory.<sup>52</sup> Consequently the commerce which also included

<sup>44</sup> “The caftan, or horse rider’s coat, which was used by the warrior class in the areas of the Rus’, reflected a growing oriental/eastern influence and was probably the result of long years of contact with the steppe nomads and the Arabic cultural sphere”; Lundström/Hedenstierna-Jonson/Holmquist Olausson, *Eastern archery* (Note 44), 110.

<sup>45</sup> Leonardo Gregoratti, *The Caucasus. A communication Space between Nomads and Sedentaries (1st BC–2nd AD)*. In: *Mountain Areas as Frontiers and/or Interaction and Connectivity Spaces*, ed. Stefano Magnani (Arachne 2013) 525–540.

<sup>46</sup> Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road. A New History* (London 2012).

<sup>47</sup> Johan Callmer, *Oriental Beads and Europe, A.D. 600–800*. In: *Rome and the North. Papers read at a symposium arranged by the Göteborg University 1993, under the auspices of the ESF project „The Transformation of the Roman World”*, ed. *Alvar Ellegård/Gunilla Åkerström-Hougen*. *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature* 135 (Jonsered 1996) 53–71; Nicola Di Cosmo, *A Note on the Formation of the „Silk Road” as Long-Distance Exchange Network*. In: *ReSilkRoad*, ed. Mehmet Bulut (Istanbul 2014) 17–26.

<sup>48</sup> Asadov, Khazaria, Byzantium, and the Arab Caliphate (Note 38), 140–150.

<sup>49</sup> H. Ghazaryan, *Soil Resources of Armenia*. In: *Soil Resources of Mediterranean and Caucasus Countries. Extension of the European Soil Database*, ed. Yusuf Yigini/Panos Panagos/Luca Montanarella. Publications Office of the European Union (Luxembourg 2013) 2–15; Amin Ismayilov, *Soil Resources of Azerbaijan*. In: *Soil Resources of Mediterranean and Caucasus Countries. Extension of the European Soil Database*, ed. Yusuf Yigini/Panos Panagos/Luca Montanarella. Publications Office of the European Union (Luxembourg 2013) 16–36; Tengiz F. Urushadze, Giorgi O. Ghambashidze, *Urushadze, Soil Resources of Georgia. Soil Resources of Mediterranean and Caucasus Countries. Extension of the European Soil Database*, ed. Yusuf Yigini/Panos Panagos/Luca Montanarella. Publications Office of the European Union (Luxembourg 2013) 77–96.

<sup>50</sup> Among the 28 sabretache burials, in 17 cases the sabretache plates were associated with belt sets decorated with fittings.

<sup>51</sup> Krylaszova/Belavin/Türk, *Ujabb adatok* (Note 29), 459.

<sup>52</sup> Evgenij Nikolaevič Chernykh, *Ancient Metallurgy in the USSR. The Early Metal Age* (Cambridge 1992) 299–308; Antoine Courcier, *Ancient Metallurgy in the Caucasus from the Sixth to the Third Millennium BCE*. In: *Archaeometallurgy in Global Perspective*, ed. Benjamin W. Roberts/Christopher Thornton (New York 2014) 579–664.

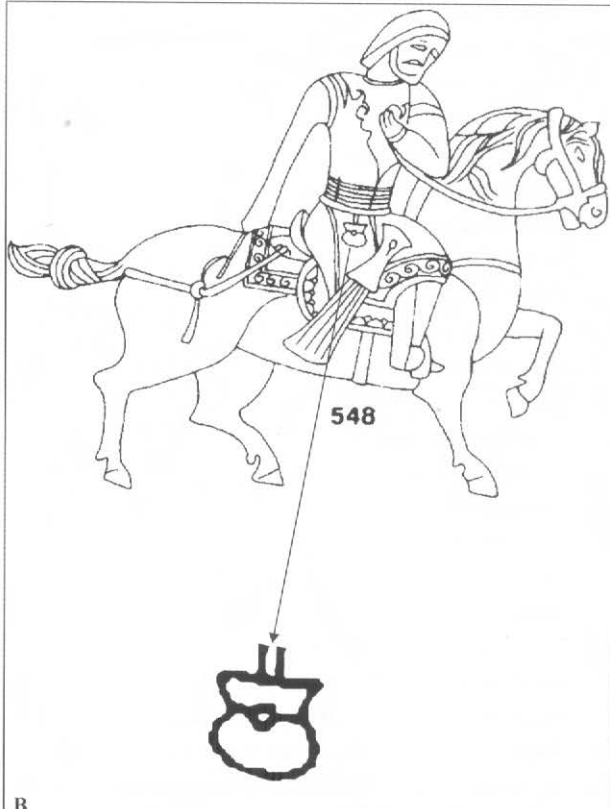
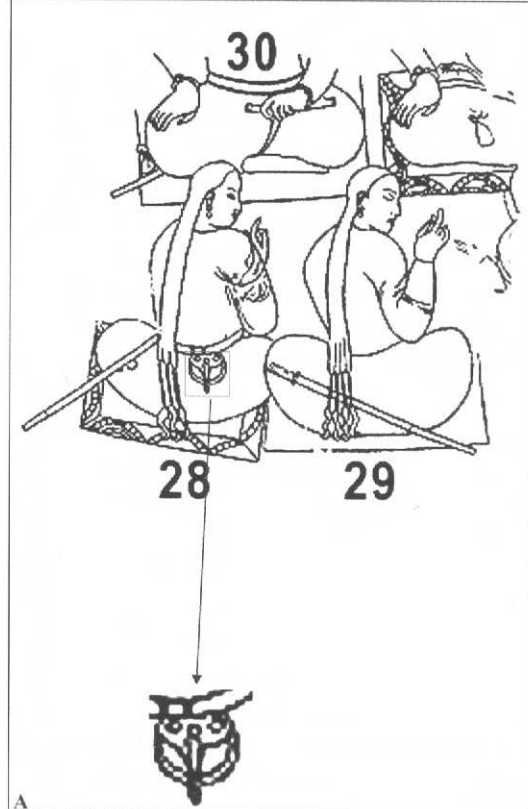


Fig.12 A The group of Turks depicted on the fresco from Afrasiab and the sabretache fastened in the belt (Samarkand), 7th century AD (after *Ciro Lo Muzio, Archaeological Traces of Early Turks in Transoxiana. An overview. In: Coins, Art and Chronology II. The First Millennium C. E. in the Indo-Iranian Borderland*, ed. Michael Alram/Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter/Minoru Inaba/Matthias Pfisterer [Vienna 2010] 429–442, Fig. 1); B Nomadic warrior depicted on a stone relief in the Dagestan region (11–13th centuries), New York, Metropolitan Museum (after *David Nicolle, Arms & Armour of the Crusading Era, 1050–1350. Islam, Eastern Europe and Asia 2* [London 1999] 442, Fig. 548).

silver products cannot by any means be limited to the region of the Volga, and should rather be considered as a northern extension of the realities from the Caucasus, as suggested by the known commercial routes (see Fig. 11).

Thus, the spread of the sabretaches worn on the belt is quite eloquent in socio-historical terms, as it speaks for the process whereby a certain clothing item or implement originally determined by the way of life of a community becomes a token of the elite when transferred to a different cultural environment in which the communities do not follow a nomadic lifestyle.<sup>53</sup>

2. The sabretache fastened on the belt is considered to be a typical element of the nomadic costume.<sup>54</sup> In this regard it is worthwhile to mention the well-known frescos from Samarkand which clearly depicts the respective clothing implement as worn by Turk nomads (Fig. 12,A). According to this picture the nomadic populations were not merely factors participating in the cultural transfers, but were also fashion initiators (Fig. 12,A–B).
3. Without any doubt the diffuse character in the distribution of this type of artefact is deter-

<sup>53</sup> Naturally this issue is determined by the relations between the respective groups and the socio-psychological background of the transfers of material culture between communities. For the socio-psychological analysis of intergroup relations see: *Henri Tajfel, Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. Annual Review of Psychology 33, 1982, 1–39; Ana Figueiredo/Joaquim*

*Pires Valentim/Bertjan Doosje, Theories on intergroup relations and emotions: A theoretical overview. Psychologica. University of Coimbra 57/2, 2015, 7–33.*

<sup>54</sup> *Архипов, Общие элементы (Note 35), 222; Fodor, A vezselőví tarsolylemez (Note 35) 466. Hedenstierna-Johnson, Magyar – Rus’ – Scandinavia (Note 44), 53: “There are a number of pouches in the Birka graves, some of which are of undisputable Magyar origin”.*

mined by the state of the research. The higher frequency of finds in the Carpathian Basin in comparison with the eastern regions is to a certain extent the result of the archaeological and ideological interest manifested towards these objects in the Hungarian Kingdom since 1834.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, even though the use of sabretaches decorated with plates is considered to have a steppe “origin”, the better understanding of certain phenomena linked with the relations of the Eurasian Steppe with the great civilisations along the “Silk Road”, the detailed investigation of the archaeological material of Central Asia, Iran, and Northern China will be called for in the future.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, the sabretaches decorated with plates from Andreyevskaya shhel and the Mardjani Collection indicate hitherto unrevealed close relations with the steppe region, and even with the Carpathian Basin and the north-eastern Caucasus,<sup>57</sup> bring to light the geo-economic and geo-political importance of the Caucasus region during the early Middle Ages, a period largely ignored by European early medieval archaeology.

## 6. List of the Sabretache Finds

The numbering refers to Map 1–2, Fig. 9.

1. Bana: Á. Kiss/A. Bartha, Graves from the Age of the Hungarian Conquest at Bana. *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22, 1970, 219–260; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 362–364 Fig. 1; Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), I Pl. 8, 70 Fig. (Pl. 2,1).

<sup>55</sup> Langó, *Archaeological Research* (Note 34), 225–226; Péter Langó, *The Study of the Archaeological Finds of the Tenth-Century Carpathian Basin as National Archaeology. Early Nineteenth-Century Views*. In: *Manufacturing Middle Ages Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Patrick J. Geary/G. Klaniczay. National cultivation of culture 6 (Leiden, Boston 2013) 397–418.

<sup>56</sup> In this regard also see Jan Romgard, *Did the Vikings trade with China? On a controversial passage in Ibn Khordāhbeh's Book of Itineraries and Kingdoms*. *Fornvännen Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities* 111, 2016, 229–242.

<sup>57</sup> In this sense see also: Gabriella M. Lezsák/Andrey Novichikhin/Erwin Gáll, *The analysis of the discoid braid ornament from Andreyevskaya Shhel (Anapa, Russia) (10th century)*. *Acta Archaeologica Carpathica* 53, 2018, 195–220.

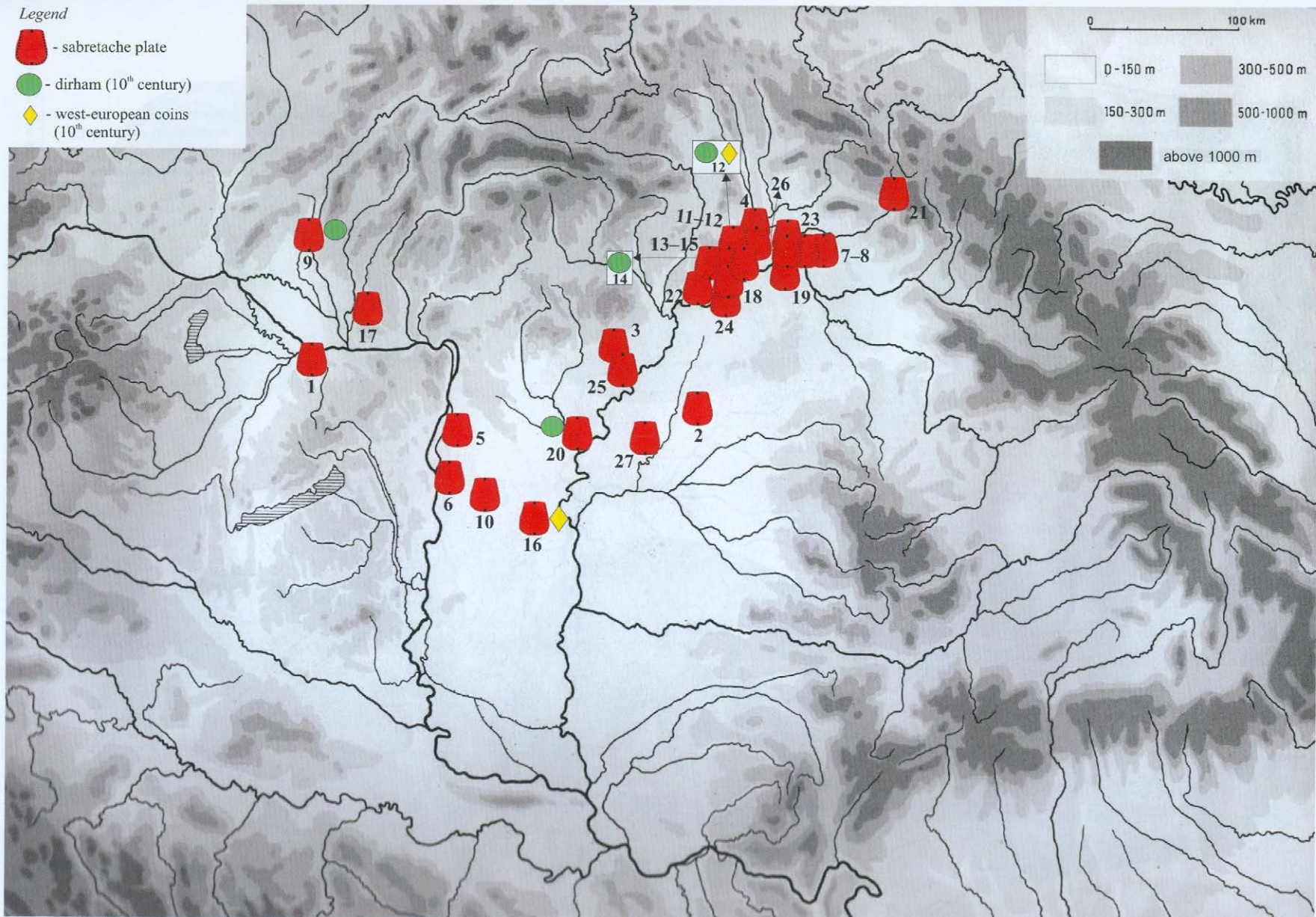
2. “Báránd”: László D. Szabó, A „bárándi” tarsolylemez. *Debreceni Szemle. Alapítvány; tudományos és kulturális folyóirat* 2013/1, 25–32; Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), I Pl. 5, 67 Fig.
3. Besenyőtelek-Szörhát: János Gyöző. Szabó, Heves megye régészeti emlékei II. Heves megye műemlékei I. In: *Magyarország Műemléki Topográfiája*, ed. Dezső Dercsényi/Pál Voit (Budapest 1969) 55; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 383–384, Fig. 1.
4. Somotor-Vécz/Bodrogyvéc (together with an Arab dirham): Gyula Dókus, Árpádkori sírleletek Zemplén vármegyében. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 20, 1900, 45–47; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 140–142, Fig. 5; Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), I Pl. 11, 73 Fig.
5. Bugyi-Felsővány grave 2: Füredi, Honfoglalás kori tarsolylemez (Note 13), 207–234; Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), I Pl. 13; Füredi, *Tarsolyok* (Note 14), 70 Fig.
6. Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza: Elek Kada, Kecskemét vidékéről való leletek. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 32, 1912, 323–329; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 297 Fig., 307–308; Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), I Pl. 18, 84 Fig. (Pl. 1,6).
- 7–8. Eperjeske graves 2–3: Lajos Kiss, Eperjeskei honfoglaláskori temető. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 39, 1920–1922, 42–55, 42–55; Fettich, *A honfoglaló magyarság* (Note 14), 79–80; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 72–75 Fig. 1–2; Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), I Pl. 10, 16, 72 Fig., 82 Fig.
9. Hlohovec/Galgóc: József Hampel, A honfoglalási kor hazai emlékei. In: *A magyar honfoglalás kútfoi*, ed. Gyula Pauler/Sándor Szilágyi (Budapest 1900) 530–533; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 388–389 Fig. 1; Bollók, *Ornamentika a 10. századi* (Note 4), I Pl. 7, 69 Fig. (Pl. 1,1).
10. Izsák-Balázspusztá: Tóth, *The Equestrian grave* (Note 31), 141–185; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 317–318 Fig. 1.

- 11–12. Karos-Éperjesszög burial ground II graves 29 and 52: Révész, A karosi honfoglaláskori temetők (Note 4), 21, 26–29, 42 Pl., 80 Pl.; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 3, 65 Fig.
- 13–15. Kenézlő-Fazekaszug burial ground I graves 3 and 14; Kenézlő-Fazekaszug burial ground II grave 28: András Jóna, Honfoglaláskori emlékek Szabolcsban II. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 34, 1914, 308–309, 321–322, XIII Fig., XXX Fig.; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 151–153 Fig. 1, 154 Fig. 8; Nándor Fettich, Adatok a honfoglaláskor archaeológiájához. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 45, 1931, 84, 54 Fig. 2; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 4, 12, 66 Fig., 66a Fig., 83 Fig.
16. Kiskunfélegyháza-Radnóti Miklós street: Elvira H. Tóth, Honfoglaláskori sír Kiskunfélegyházán. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 101, 1974, 112–125; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 331 Fig. 1; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 6, 68 Fig.
17. Perbete grave 3: István Dienes, A perbetei lelet. Milyen volt a honfoglaló magyarok öve? *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 86, 1959, 147, XXVII Pl. 11.
18. Rakamaz-Strázsahalom grave "A": István Dienes, A honfoglaló magyarok és ősi hiedelmek. In: *Uráli népek*, ed. Péter Hajdú (Budapest 1975) 15 Fig.; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 110–111, 113, Fig. 1; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 1, 63 Fig. (Pl. 1,3).
19. Rétközberencs-Paromdomb grave 3 (stray find): István Dienes, A Felső-Tisza vidék a X. században. In: *Szabolcs-Szatmár megye műemlékei I*, ed. Dezső Dercsényi/Géza Entz (Budapest 1986) 54 Fig.; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 168.
20. Szolnok-Strázsahalom: Fettich, A honfoglaló magyarság (Note 14), 181; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 282, 284 Fig. 1; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 20, 86 Fig. (Pl. 1,5).
21. Svaláva/Szolyva: Tivadar Lehóczky, A szolyvai hun sír. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 3, 1870, 201–206; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 175–178 Fig. 1; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 9, 71 Fig. (Pl. 1,2).
22. Tarczal-Rimai dűlő grave 4: András Jóna, A tarczali sírleletről. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 15, 1895, 75–76; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 120 Fig. 1; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 1, 64 Fig. (Pl. 1,4).
23. Tiszabездéd-Harangláb dűlő grave 8: András Jóna, A bezdédi honfoglaláskori temető. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 16, 1896, 398–400, 398 VIII sír; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 180–184 Fig. 1–4; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), 429–501, I Pl. 14.
24. Tiszaeszlár-Bashalom B.g. I grave D: Dienes, Un cimetière de Hongrois (Note 30), 245–275; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 185–187 Fig. 1.
25. Tiszanána-Cseh tanya grave 1: Dienes, Honfoglalás kori (Note 14), 89; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 412–413 Fig. 1; Révész, Heves megye 10–11 (Note 18), 284–285, 71 Pl.
26. Tuzsér-Boszorkányhegy grave 6: András Jóna, Emlékek a honfoglalás korából. *Archaeologiai Értesítő. A Magyar Régészeti és Művészettörténeti Társulat tudományos folyóirata* 20, 1900, 222 Fig.; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 204–206 Fig. 6; Istvánovits, A Rétköz honfoglalás (Note 14), 236–238, 228–230 Pl.
27. Túrkeve-Ecsegpusztá: János Győző Szabó, Das silberne Taschenblech von Túrkeve-Ecsegpusztá. *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32, 1980, 271–293; *The Ancient Hungarians* (Note 2), 294–295, Fig. 1; Bollók, Ornamentika a 10. századi (Note 4), I Pl. 19, 85 Fig.

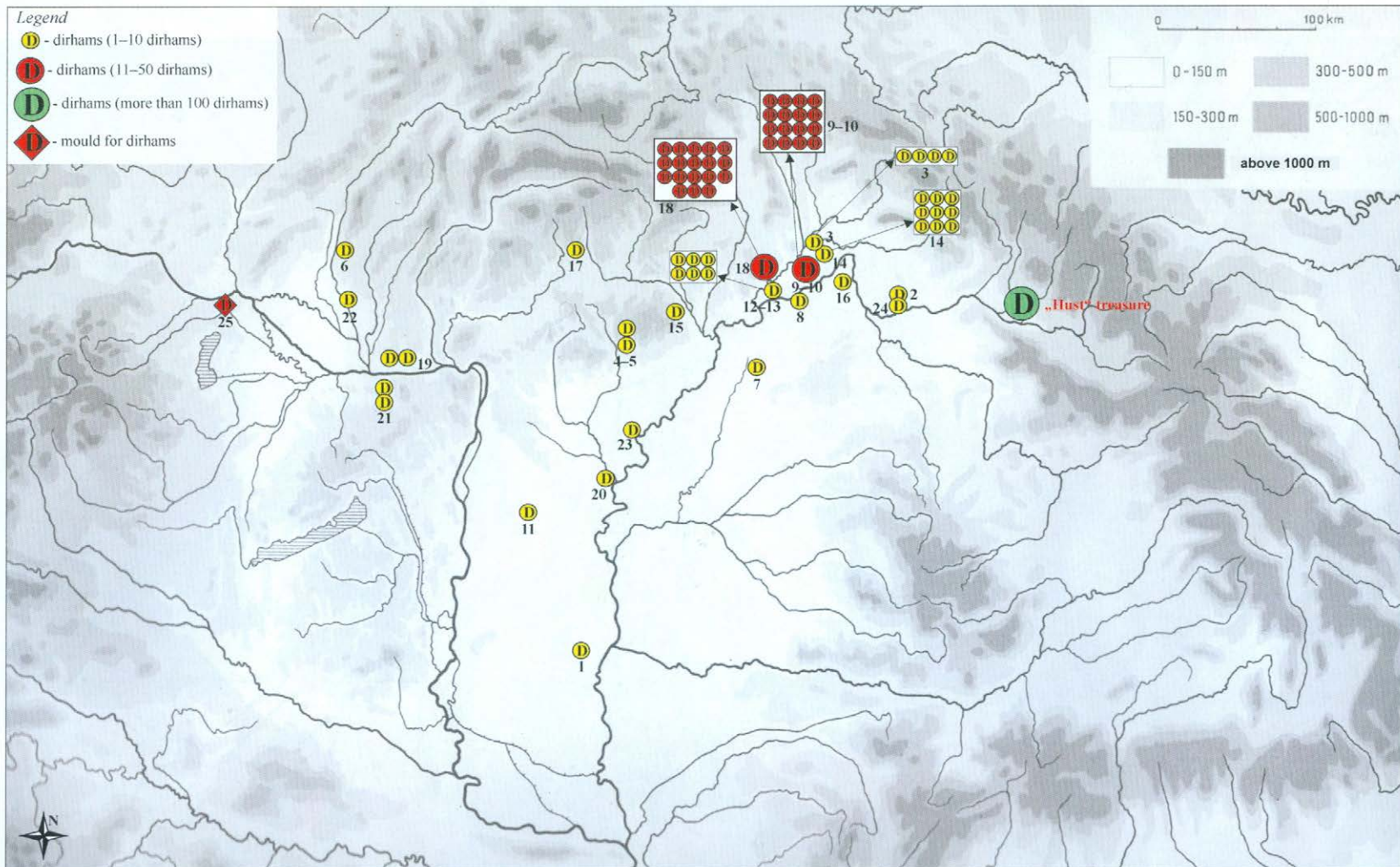
28. Andreyevskaya shhel.: Andrey Novicsihin/Gabriella M. Lezsák/Erwin Gáll, Tarsolylemez-töredék Andrejevskaja scselből. Gondolatok a tarsolyok Kelet-Európai és Kárpát-medencei elterjedésével kapcsolatban. *Alba Regia* 45, 2017, 67–88.
29. Kryukovo-Kuzhnoye grave 472: Krylaszova/Belavin/Türk, Újabb adatok (Note 29), 9 Fig. 1–2.
30. Panovo grave 2: István Erdélyi, Az ősmagyar-ság régészeti emlékei Kelet-Európában. In: *Magyar Őstörténeti Tanulmányok*, szerk. Antal Bartha/Károly Czeglédy/András Róna-Tas (Budapest 1977) 2 Fig.; Krylaszova/Belavin/Türk, Újabb adatok (Note 29), 7 Fig. 1–4.
31. Perm: Andrej M. Belavin/Natalja B. Krilaszo-va, Tarsolylemez Perm környékéről. *Folia Archaeologica. A Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Évkönyve. Annales Musei Nationalis Hungarici* 54, 2008–2010, 243–249; István Fodor, Őstörténeti viták és álviták. In: *Csodaszarvas IV*, szerk. Ádám Molnár (Budapest 2012) 125–146; Krylaszova/Belavin/Türk, Újabb adatok (Note 29), 3 Fig. 1.
32. Rusenikha grave 2: Никитина, Поясные (Note 31), 152–153, 155 Fig. 2–3; István Fodor, Honfoglalás kori tarsolylemezeink és keleti párhuzamaik. *Magyar Tudomány* 178/6, 2017, 3 Fig. 1.
33. Vesëlovo [near Semëново] grave 19: Fodor, A veszelovói tarsolylemez (Note 35), 457–470.
- 34–36. The Mardjani Collection (Southern Ural): К. А. Руденко, Редкие находки эпохи Хазарского Каганата (Заметки о хазарско-венгерском искусстве). *Теория и практика археологических исследований* 15/3, 2016, 76, 78–79 Fig. 12–14; István Fodor, Honfoglalás kori tarsolylemezeink és keleti párhuzamaik. *Magyar Tudomány* 178/6, 2017, 3 Fig. 2–4. (Pl. 2,2–4).
- 37–38. Birka/Björko graves 644 and 819: Holger Arbman, Birka I. *Die Gräber* (Uppsala 1943) Pl. 129/1a–1b, 222–223, 295.



Map 1 The geographical distribution of the sabretache plates (the numbering of the sites corresponds to List 1).



Map 2 The sabretache plates in the Carpathian Basin during the 10th century (the numbering of the sites corresponds to List 1).



**Archaeological sites:** 1. Ásotthalom-Rivo; 2. Beregovo-Búcsú; 3. Somotor-Véé/Bodrogvécs-Homokdomb; 4. Eger-Almagyar; 5. Eger-Répatető grave 1; 6. Hlohovec/Galgóc; 7. Hajdúdorog-Temetőhegy; 8. Ibrány-Esbóhalom grave 197/b; 9. Karos-Eperjesszög Burial ground I stray finds; 10. Karos-Eperjesszög Burial ground II stray finds, graves 1, 2, 7, 51; 11. Kecskemét-Orgovány stray find; 12. Kenézlő-Fazekaszög Burial ground I grave 14; 13. Kenézlő-Fazekaszög Burial ground II grave 19; 14. Dobra/Kisdobra-Ligahomok grave 2; 15. Kistokaj-Homokbánya grave 53; 16. Pap-Rózsadomb grave 7; 17. Prša/Perse-Berez, Borszeg grave 101; 18. Sárospatak-Baksahomok graves 1, 2, and 4; 19. Szilas-Tercsi dűlő; 20. Szolnok-Strázasahalom grave; 21. Szomód-Bocskahegy grave; 22. Tvrdošovce/Tardoskedd-Paptag grave 1; 23. Tiszatily-Éhhalom; 24. Čoma/Tiszacsoma-Szipahát grave 3; Bad Deutsch Altenburg/Németóvár.

Map 3 The geographical distribution of the dirhams in the Carpathian Basin (10th century).





1



2



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4



5



6

Plate 1 The sabretache plates from the Carpathian Basin. 1 Hlohovec/Galgóc; 2 Svaláva/Szolyva; 3 Rakamaz-Strázsahalom grave "A"; 4 Tarcfal-Rímai dűlő grave 4; 5 Szolnok-Strázsahalom; 6 Dunavecse-Fehéregyháza.



1



2



3



4

Plate 2 The sabretache plates from the Carpathian Basin and the Eastern Europe. 1 Bana; 2–4 The Mardjani Collection (after: AN 1996, 362: Fig. 1; К. А. Руденко, Великая Венгрия и Леведия: Венгры в Хазарии. In: Путешествие Ибн Фадлана. Волжский путь от Багдада до Булгара, Каталог выставки Казань, Февраль–сентябрь 2016 [Москва 2016] 338–347, here 338: 251, 339: 252, 340: 253).

The subject of this article is the analysis of the characteristics, chronology, and distribution of sabretache plates, which were regarded as genuine Hungarian products from the beginning of the 10th century for about 150 years. Being one of the most iconic artefacts of the “funerary horizon” of the Hungarian Conquest Period in the Carpathian Basin, sabretaches and in particular their decoration has been in constant attention of – especially Hungarian – archaeologists. Sabretache plates share similar characteristics within the vast areas of the Eastern Europe and the Carpathian Basin. Even so, rectangular openwork in the central part of the sabretache plate have been identified only in the Eastern Europe steppe region, with one single exception in the Carpathian Basin. The analysed items cannot be dated earlier than 920/930 in these areas, respectively the latest item not later than the last decades of the 10th century. Numerous fundamental questions have to be posed about the cause and character of the macro-regional distribution of sabretache plates across the Carpathian Basin, Scandinavia, the steppe region, and the Ural region. Analysing the associated inventories in funerary contexts from Scandinavia, Volga and the Cama region, steppe region, and the Carpathian Basin, a further cultural and economic link emerges between the respective macro-regions; i. e. the 10th century Arab dirhams. These items can be associated with long distance commerce. In every single case, finding places of sabretache plates are located in the vicinity of the great Eurasian commercial roads, which highlights further the “international” character of these clothing accessories. This situation can only be explained through the presence of Arabic political and economic factor, and its relations with Khazar, Pecheneg and Viking networks of power, representing the existence of a complex system of communication channels.

*Zusammenfassung: Ein Blick von West nach Ost. Eine Analyse von Kennzeichen, Chronologie und Verbreitung der Taschenplatten im 10. Jahrhundert*

Der Artikel analysiert Merkmale, Chronologie und Verbreitung der Taschenplatten, die als Produkte der Ungarn des 10. Jahrhunderts seit 150 Jahren anerkannt sind. Als besonders ikonischer Gegenstand des „Gräberhorizonts“ der ungarischen Landnahmezeit im Karpatenbecken erlangten diese Taschenplatten und besonders ihre Verzierung die andauernde Aufmerksamkeit der – insbesondere ungarischen – Archäologen. Taschenplatten besitzen ähnliche Merkmale in weiten Gebieten Osteuropas und des Karpatenbeckens. Dennoch ist ein rechteckiger Durchbruch in der Mitte der Taschenplatten nur in der osteuropäischen Steppenregion bekannt und lediglich einmal aus dem Karpatenbecken. Die analysierten Stücke können nicht früher als um 920/930 datiert werden und das jüngste Objekt nicht später als in die letzten Jahrzehnte des 10. Jahrhunderts. Zahlreiche grundlegende Fragen stellen sich – zu Ursachen und Charakter ihres weitreichenden Vorkommens im Karpatenbecken, in Skandinavien, in der Steppenregion und am Ural. Bei der Analyse der Grabkontexte in Skandinavien, im Wolga- und Kama-Gebiet, in der Steppenregion und im Karpatenbecken wird ein weiterer funerals und wirtschaftlicher Zusammenhang zwischen diesen Gebieten sichtbar – arabische Dirhams des 10. Jahrhunderts. Sie lassen sich mit dem Fernhandel erklären. Die Fundorte jeder einzelnen Taschenplatte liegen in der Nähe großer europäischer Handelsrouten, was erneut den „internationalen“ Charakter dieser Kleidungsbestandteile unterstreicht. Das kann nur durch die Auswirkungen arabischer Politik und Wirtschaft erklärt werden und ihre Beziehungen zu politischen Netzwerken bei Chasaren, Petschenegen und Skandinaviern, die wiederum ein komplexes System von Kommunikationskanälen widerspiegeln.