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GERGELY SZENTHE

**CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE MEDITERRANEAN
AND THE CARPATHIAN BASIN IN THE 8TH CENTURY AD.
ON THE HINGED STRAP-ENDS OF THE LATE AVAR PERIOD**

ABSTRACT

G. Szenthe 2013. *Connections between the Mediterranean and the Carpathian Basin in the 8th century AD. On the hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar Period*, AAC 48: 195–225.

The paper examines hinged strap-ends adopted from Mediterranean sources into the material culture of the Avar Period Carpathian Basin (7th–8th centuries AD). According to the common patterns in the local use of several formal or technical elements the appearance of the hinged strap-ends *inter alia* in the Avar context must be related to direct and contemporaneous contacts with the Mediterranean. Two levels of communication could be identified in the archaeological material. If hinges generate more complex variations of object types embedded in simpler form in the common material culture of the same period, the mediator was most probably the Late Avar elite, deriving a material culture from an elite communication that was not structured primarily by geographical distances. A second group of hinged strap-ends clustering at the borders, but principally in the western region of the Carpathian Basin, are largely independent of the common Avar types. Their characteristics, alien in the local context, originated from direct interregional exchange with the neighbouring Mediterranean peripheries.

Key words: Carpathian Basin; Early Medieval Period; Avar Khaganate; Byzantium; hinged strap-ends

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INTRODUCTION

After three decades of intensive research it is now evident that the Mediterranean influenced the material culture of the Carpathian Basin in a determinative manner, also in the Early Middle Ages¹. Moreover, there is solid evidence on contacts during the Avar Period (second half of the 6th–early 9th century) with other regions and cultures (Merovingian and Carolingian Europe, and the Eurasian steppes).

¹ For the key stages of the research process guiding Avar archaeology from a ‘steppe era’ to European and Byzantine settings, see Bálint 1992; 2004; 2010b; Daim 2000; 2001; Garam 2001; Kiss 1999; 2001a; 2001b.

The task for the researcher of that age is today, after the successful positioning of the early medieval Carpathian Basin in the border region of the Byzantine world, to distinguish between the layers of the local cultural environment feeding from different sources. The present paper tries to contribute to this question by analyzing a single type of object, the hinged strap-ends of the 8th century AD.

The research established it as a fact that the hinged strap-ends have Byzantine antecedents (Kiss 2001a, 434; Stadler 1986, 110; Werner 1986, 43). The hinged mechanism on strap-ends is observed on strap-ends of military belts since the late Roman Period (at the turn of 3rd and 4th century; cf. Oldenstein 1976, Fig. 11–12, Plates 37, 68, 83). Analogous finds appear in the Mediterranean Basin in the 7th–10th centuries too (Balkan Peninsula, Samos)². The broken hinged strap-end from Velino was, most probably, a product of a provincial Byzantine environment (Stanilov 2006, 94–95, Fig. 4; Fig. 5:1). Thus, the origin of the hinged form is clear.

On the other hand, the modes of communication between the Mediterranean and its border regions, like the Carpathian Basin, are unclear. According to recent objectives, we should examine how these object types, and also formal or technological nuances, like the hinges, of a Mediterranean material culture could have been incorporated into the Late Avar arts and crafts. On the baseline of this survey are the patterns in the local adaptation of the hinged strap-ends; therefore, the entire method here is to make analysis of the dynamics in the use of this design within 8th-century Avar materials.

8TH CENTURY HINGED STRAP-ENDS FROM THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

Hinged strap-ends have been analysed in two studies so far. G. Kiss and P. Stadler — on the basis of a representative collection — surveyed them in relation to other finds but without a more in-depth analysis (Stadler 1986, 110, list 12; Kiss 2001a, 434, Table 6). The aim of the present study is a more extensive and comprehensive analysis. The hinged strap-ends are known from only a small number of finds and as such are not representative for the Late Avar material culture. As common for the belt ornaments of the contemporaneous Late Avar material culture (8th century), the collected pieces are cast of non-ferrous metals (mostly copper alloys). Most of the 37 specimens listed here have already been published in photographs or drawings. Except for the large strap-end from Császártöltés, now displayed in the Hungarian National Museum and the piece from the grave No. 2302 at Zamárdi³, the other artefacts,

² Kastro Tigani, Samos: *The World...*, 228; for its 9th-century dating see Bollók manuscript, note 93; Mogorjelo, Schulze-Dörrlamm 2009, 243, Fig. 88.

³ My thanks go to É. Garam for permission to use the find and its photograph.

though not described thoroughly so far, can also be analyzed on the basis of the published data.

The descriptions of the unpublished finds are the following:

1. Császártöltés, Bács-Kiskun megye, Hungary (Fig. 3:3). Hinged, socketed large strap-end, fragment L: 76 mm; W: 23 mm (at the socket). Cast from copper alloy, tinned, roughly designed, concave-sided with rounded terminal. The unadorned socket retains two rivets. On the terminal is an abraded knob. Within an engraved border of pseudo-beading is an openwork pattern of an interlacing loop-ornament, five groups of loops, five to a group; the interior of the strip loops is mostly filled with metal.

2. Zamárdi-Rétiföldek, Somogy megye, Hungary, grave No. 2302 (Fig. 5:3). Hinged, socketed large strap-end with attachment lugs. L: 155 mm; W: 32 mm (at the socket). Long U-shaped piece of good quality, cast in one piece of copper alloy, tinned. The three lugs are simple knobs. The openwork pattern is surrounded inside of the plain frame by an arcade-frame. The strap-end is decorated with half-palmettes fitted on the ends of interlacing pairs of loops; there are anti-parallel trefoils placed in a vertical position between the half-palmettes. The pattern is repeated four times, also on the hinged socket.

In the same grave there were openwork shield-shaped belt mounts decorated with palmettes, an openwork buckle with a tendril ornament and three small socketed, concave-sided strap-ends with circular-lobe tendrils.

CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMES

The finds display attributes distinctive for the first part of the Late Avar Period. The socketed strap-end with concave sides and a pointed terminal is the most common type during chronological phases 1–2 of the Late Avar Period (Daim 1987, Fig. 28: SPA I–II; Z á b o j n í k 1991, 236–237: SS I–II; see the types on pages 284–292; In phase 4 of the cemetery in Tiszafüred, Hungary, G a r a m 1995, 408)⁴. Within this phase cast pieces with strap-fasteners and open sockets can usually be dated earlier (see the large strap-end in Budapest; for dating see Daim 2003, 499; Z á b o j n í k 1991, 237), while for socketed specimens with attachment lugs the later SS II is relevant (Z á b o j n í k 1991, 237–238, types 46–47)⁵.

⁴ The two main chronological systems of F. Daim and J. Z á b o j n í k are not exactly the same although the first two phases — of relevance for the purpose of this study, namely, SS (*Spätstufe*) I and II, and SPA (*Spätawarisch*) I and II — are identical. Only the system of J. Z á b o j n í k is used here since the structure of its phases is based on an extensive seriation of Avar belt mounts and strap-ends.

⁵ Indirectly — because of the presence of a wide shield-shaped mount with a hinged pendant — this specimen may be dated to the end of period SS II in J. Z á b o j n í k's relative dating (which corresponds to Falko Daim's SPA II, Daim, Lippert 1984, 88, Fig. 15).

The published contexts of the hinged strap-ends do not contradict either of these chronological frameworks. The belt-set from Székkutas (Fig. 1:6) and the grave No. 125 in Tiszafüred (Fig. 2:2) contained rectangular belt mounts cut out of thick bronze sheet, something that supports their early status (SPA I or SS I, B. Nagy 2003, Fig. 15 and Garam 1995, Table 68, on the early dating of these sets see Zábójník 1991, 236). The finds from Budapest, Nagypall, Gyód, Dévaványa, Kölked, grave No. 190 in Tiszafüred, and from graves at Šebastovce, Slovakia (Nos. 2, 4, 9, 13, 15, 31; *cf.* Fig. 1:2, 5, 7; Fig. 2:1, 3; Fig. 3:2; Fig. 4:2) can be dated generally to the first half of the Late Avar Period, i.e., period SS I–II (Zábójník 1991, 236–238). According to J. Zábójník's argument the cornucopia pattern of the strap-end from grave No. 131 discovered at Šebastovce, Slovakia (No. 22) can be dated to the end of the same period (second half of SS II, Zábójník 1991, 239). The large strap-end from grave No. 805, Zamárdi (No. 36, see Fig. 3:6) was discovered in association with forms dated to the second half of the Late Avar Period (mounts of narrow shield-form in groups of three, SS III, Zábójník 1991, 239–240), not consistent with its early characteristics. In this case the strap-end was probably added to the belt-set sometime later.

The second group of hinged strap-ends are long U-shaped specimens with a rounded terminal. The strap-ends are mostly openwork with heterogenic, rich ornamentation (Zábójník 1991, 247). The extended U-form on strap-ends cast in one piece — as distinct from the later strap-ends put together from two identical pieces is often accompanied by attachment lugs (see the finds from Perchtoldsdorf, Austria; Dolní Dunajovice, Czech Republic and Pohořelice, Czech Republic, Nos. 6, 19, 21; see Fig. 5:2, Fig. 6:1–2, which can be typologically placed on the margin of the Late Avar culture). In view of their context they represent a later type than forms with concave sides and a pointed terminal (see the seriation chart by Zábójník 1991, 237). Like the U-shaped strap-ends, the wide shield-shaped mounts also frequently occur beside the rectangular ones: the spread of these is concordantly dated after the rectangular mounts decorated with griffins (works dealing with the Late Avar chronology: Daim, Lippert 1984, 88, Fig. 15; Zábójník 1991, 239). As É. Garam (1995, 410 and Fig. 90) expressed, the strap-ends cast in one piece with the socket and with only vegetal ornaments, and along with them, the wide shield-shaped mounts, were present in the transitional period of the 4th–5th generations in the cemetery in Tiszafüred. Thus, although the openwork specimens decorated with rich floral ornaments are missing from Tiszafüred⁶ Garam drew attention to the same phenomenon related to the finds in the transitional period of the 4th–5th generations of a single cemetery, something also highlighted by F. Daim and J. Zábójník. Apparently, during the second half of the life of the 'griffin and tendril style' the decorative spectrum widened. Other than the griffins, rectangular mounts and concave-sided strap-ends with

⁶ E.g. in contrast with specimens discovered at Szentes-Nagyhegy and Öcsöd, Nos. 18 and 27.

pointed terminals, typical for the first chronological phase of the Late Avar Period, wide shield-shaped mounts but also U-shaped openwork strap-ends cast in one piece occurred more frequently.

This dating is confirmed also by the large strap-end found at Grabelsdorf, Austria (No. 8; Fig. 5:1). Though the belt-set was dated at first to MA II (*Mittelawarisch*; see Daim 1987, Fig. 28; Zábajník 1991, 234–235) on the evidence of sheet-metal mounts (late 7th-century forms; cf. Szameit 1993, 214–215), it also contained spurs typical for the first half of the 8th century (Szameit 1993, 218).

The youngest specimen on the list is a large strap-end from grave No. 342 at Gátér, Hungary (Fig. 6:5; Fettich 1965, Fig. 162:9). Its geometric circular-lobe pattern dates this specimen to SS III but it was cast in one piece, like the U-shaped strap-ends during period SS II, in contrast with strap-ends set together from two identical cast-pieces, period SS III (see the types of Zábajník 1991, 238). Therefore, on the basis of its formal characteristics the specimen from Gátér is typologically a transitional form between periods SS II and SS III.

On the basis of the available typonchronological evidence, every Late Avar hinged strap-end may be dated to the first two relative chronological phases of that period. On the grounds of formal criteria it is likely that in most cases they belong in SS I and the first half of SS II. In the light of the above discussed literature the absolute chronology of the large strap-ends would extend to the first two-thirds of the 8th century.

HINGED STRAP-ENDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AVAR MATERIAL CULTURE

The largest group of hinged strap-ends are forms with concave sides ornamented with horizontal griffin-friezes (Budapest, Dévaványa, Nagymágocs, Szeged, Székkutas, Szentes-Jaksor, Tiszaeszlár, grave No. 190 of Tiszafüred: Nos. 2, 4, 14, 24–25, 28–29, 31 of the list; see Fig. 1). Specimens of the same form and an animal combat scene were discovered at Nagypall, Novi Slankamen, Serbia (Nos. 15–16, Fig. 2:3–4; see the second type of animal combat scenes, Szenthe 2013, 147–150), Gyód, and in grave No. 125 in Tiszafüred (Fig. 2:1–2; see the first type of animal combat scenes, Szenthe 2013, 145–147).

The regional spread in the Carpathian Basin, of the discussed form of strap-end is roughly even although some regional differences can be observed in their formal details (Fig. 8). Specimens ornamented with a horizontal predator frieze appear to be characteristic for the Tisza region. In 4 out of 7 cases the griffins are framed and separated by bars. On the strap-ends found in Szeged and Tiszaeszlár, Hungary (Nos. 24, 29; cf. Fig. 1:1, 4) the pattern fields are framed with separate beaded enclosures and each griffin is separated by



Fig. 1. Selected hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar Period (m — megye; H. — Hungary); computer designed by G. Szenthe.

1 — Szeged-Sövényháza, Csongrád m., H.; after J. Hampel (1905, vol. III, Pl. 97:12); 2 — Dévaványa-Köleshalom, Békés m., H., grave No. 11; after I. Kovrig (1975, Pl. XX:1); 3 — Nagymágocs-Ótompahát, Csongrád m., H.; after G. Fancsalszky (2007, 10, Pl. 7); 4 — Tiszaeszlár-Kunsírpárt, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H., grave No. 7; after G. Fancsalszky (2007, 10, Pl. 4); 5 — Budapest-IX, Wekerle-telep, Budapest m., H., grave No. 35; after M. Nagy (1998b, Pl. 52); 6 — Székkutas-Kápolnadúló, Csongrád m., H., grave No. 38, after K. B. Nagy (2003, Fig. 15); 7 — Tiszafüred-Majoros, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H., grave No. 190; after É. Garam (1995, Pl. 202:1).



Fig. 2. Selected hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar Period (m — megye; H. — Hungary); computer designed by G. Szenthe.

1 — Győd-Máriahegy, Baranya m., H., grave No. 38; after A. Kiss (1977, Pl. VII); 2 — Tiszafüred-Majoros, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H., grave No. 125; after É. Garam (1995, 23, Pl. 68); 3 — Nagypall I-Határi-dűlő, Baranya m., H., grave No. 16; Photo by G. Szenthe; 4 — Novi Slankamen, Sremski okrug, Serbia, grave No. 20; after G. Fancsalszky (2007, Pl. 5).

bars in a similar design. The frame of the large strap-end from Dévaványa, Hungary (No. 4; see Fig. 1:2) is identical to these, but here the animals are separated by plain bars. On the specimen from Nagymágocs, Hungary (No. 14; see Fig. 1:3) the beaded bar is only modelled between the griffins.

Decorative bars are rare in Avar finds of the first part of the Late Avar Period (SS I–II). In the lists of G. Fancsalszky out of 111 strap-ends with animal friezes there are only 15 where bars can be observed. Borders around the pattern field or the entire strap-end are observed only in 14 specimens — most of which are specimens with decorative bars (12 of the 15 pieces; cf. Fancsalszky 2007, lists of objects between pp. 48 and 58). Among the animal combat scenes, except for the piece found at Romonya, Hungary (Kiss 1977, Plate XLV [here the floral pattern on the obverse side is framed]), framing is observed only on specimens ornamented with ‘Mediterranean’ type 1 animal combat scenes (subsiding ungulate between a pair of antithetic predators, Szenthe 2013, 145–147): on two hinged strap-ends (from Győd and from grave No. 125 in Tiszafüred, Nos. 9, 30; see Fig. 2: 1–2), but with non-hinged strap-ends only in grave No. 32 in Kecel-Határi-dűlő and in Zamárdi, Hungary (for these see Cs. Sós 1958, XX. Plate 1; Garam 2002, 100, Fig. 25:B/1; drawing in Fancsalszky 2007, 45, Plate 7). Thus, the different framing techniques — including the decorative bars as well — are more likely to occur on the hinged strap-ends (in three-quarter of all cases) than within the average (22,5% with animal friezes excluding the hinged ones; two out of 36 [6%] within type 1 of the animal combat scenes also without the hinged ones; and only 1 out of 132 with type 2 of the animal combat scenes). There

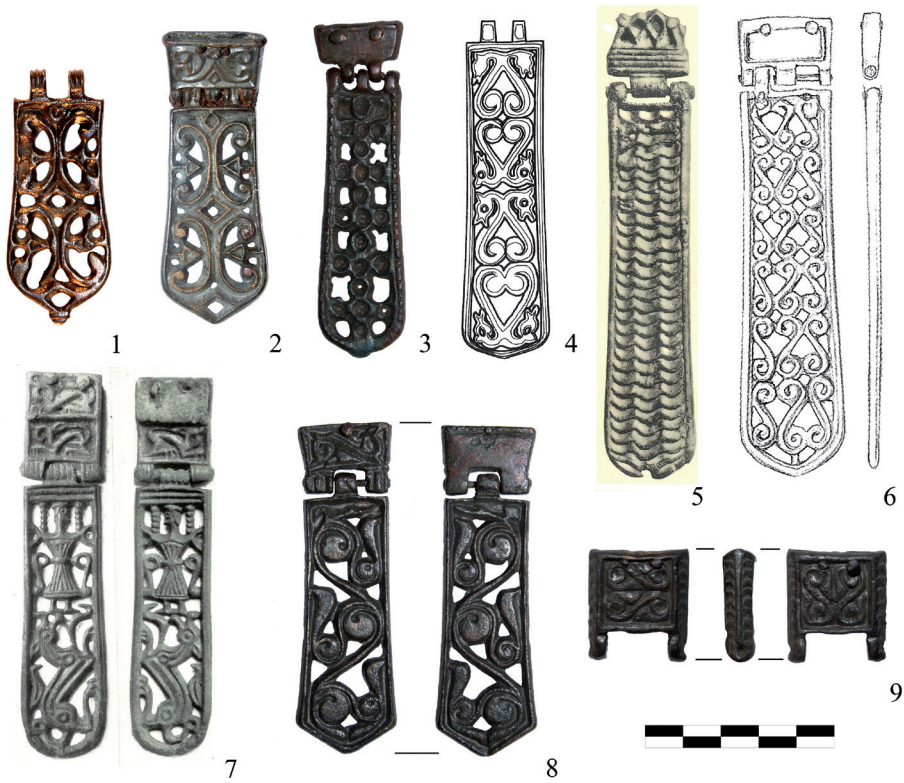


Fig. 3. Selected hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar Period (m — megye; H. — Hungary);
computer designed by G. Szenthe; 1–3, 8–9 — Photo by G. Szenthe.

1 — Keszthely-Dobogó, Zala m., H., grave find; 2 — Kölked-Feketekapu B, Baranya m., H., grave No. 419;
3 — Császártöltés, Bács-Kiskun m., H., stray find; 4 — Szentes-Jaksor, Kettőshalom, Csongrád m., H., grave C;
after G. Fancsalszky (2007, 46, Pl. 7); 5 — Veszprém-Jutas Seredomb, Veszprém m., H., grave No. 28;
after N. Fettich (1929, X, Pl. 1); 6 — Zamárdi-Rétiföldek, Somogy m., H., grave No. 805; after
E. Bárdos, É. Garam (2009, Pl. 213); 7 — Vasasszonyfa, Vas m., H.; after N. Fettich (1937, 57, Pl. 1);
8 — Ordas-Dunapart, Bács-Kiskun m., H., grave No. 5; 9 — Vác, Pest m., H., stray find.

is a simple tendril type with large, circular leaves, very popular in the Avar material culture ('circular lobe ornaments') on the reverse of several strap-ends: on one now in Budapest, on the specimen from grave No. 125 at in Tiszafüred, and on the find from Székkutas (Nos. 2, 28 and 30; see Fig. 1:5–6; Fig. 2:2; see parallels e.g. Z á b o j n í k 1991, in types 20, 24, 25 and 36). The other patterns observed on hinged strap-ends with concave sides and a pointed terminal are rather infrequent variants in the contemporaneous Avar culture. The strap-end from Ordas and the reverse of the find from Tiszaeszlár (Nos. 17, 22 and 29; cf. Fig. 3:8) are ornamented with a so-called Vrap type scroll (for the concept see G a r a m 1997), while the strap-end found in grave No. 131 at Šebastovce, and the obverse side from Gyód are decorated with foliated scrolls and cornucopia (both in: Z á b o j n í k 1991, 239 [for their rather rare parallels see types 37, and 40–41]).



Fig. 4. Hódmezővásárhely-Mártély, Csongrád megye, Hungary. Belt-set from grave 'B';
Photo by G. Szenthe.

The reverse patterns of the strap-ends found at Jutas, Nagymágocs⁷ and Nagypall (Nos. 14–15, 34; see Fig. 3:5) are similar variants of geometric fish-bone and 'strigilis' motifs (Nagy 1998, Fig. 19-20), also not very widespread in Avar contexts. The large strap-ends from Kölked and Keszthely (Nos. 12–13; cf. Fig. 3:1–2) feature geometric pattern-types atypical in the Carpathian Basin; both strap-ends are identical typologically and in size⁸. The strap-end found in grave No. 342 in Šebastovce with a geometrical pattern is unique (No. 23, with openwork grid ornament), as well as the large strap-end from Mártély at all points (No. 10; see Fig. 4:3).

The second group of the hinged strap-ends are long U-shaped forms (Öcsöd, Szentes-Nagyhegy, Vasasszonyfa, grave No. 2302 in Zamárdi-Rétiföldek, Hungary; Grabelsdorf, Perchtoldsdorf, Austria; Dolní Dunajovice, and, finally, Pohorelice, Czech Republic lying outside the Avar settlement area, Nos. 6, 8, 18-19, 21, 27, 33, 37; cf. Fig. 3:7; Figs. 5–6).

The only parallel within the Carpathian Basin for the pattern on the strap-end from Vasasszonyfa, formerly in the Fleissig collection (today lost), can be

⁷ The strap-end erroneously provenanced by I. Erdélyi to Szentes-Lapistó (Erdélyi 1966, 37) is in fact the back face of the piece from Nagymágocs, also published on a photo by I. Erdélyi (No. 14; see Erdélyi 1966, 31).

⁸ A specimen from Szekszárd-Palánk, south-western Hungary, identical to both strap-ends was published only when this paper was completed (see Pap 2013, Plate 24: 33.11).

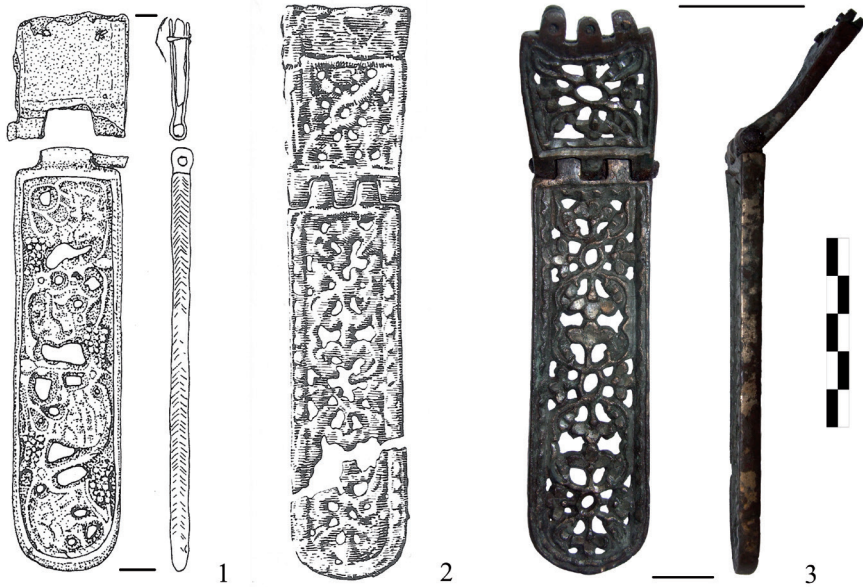


Fig. 5. Selected hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar Period; computer designed by G. Szenthe.
 1 — Grabelsdorf bei St Kanzian am Klopeiner See, Kärnten, Bezirk Völkermarkt, Austria, grave find; after E. Szameit (1993, Pl. 1:20); 2 — Dolní Dunajovice, okres Břeclav, Czech Republic; after Z. Klanica (1972, 6, Pl. 2:1); 3 — Zamárdi-Rétiföldek, Somogy megye, Hungary, grave No. 2302; Photo by G. Szenthe.

seen on a buckle from Liesing, Vienna, Austria (Mossler 1975, 87, Plate VIII:1; Daim 1990, 295, Fig. 7; cf. Fig. 6:2); the object will be discussed in more detail later in connection with the origin of the hinged strap-end.

The rest of the long U-shaped strap-ends belong to one formal group, which shows great similarities with other socketed strap-ends, with or without lugs. Various patterns of late antique origin combining vegetal elements with several geometric ornaments are typical for the group. The belt-set from Szentes-Nagyhegy was introduced by N. Fettich (1965, Fig. 185–186) along with the graves in Csongrád-Máma (Csallány 1941, Plate I): the buckles from the two sites are the same, the shield-shaped mounts are typologically identical, and both strap-ends are exceedingly long, with motifs of late antique origin (busts in medallions, palmettes combining pomegranates with grapes; the back face of the two strap-ends are ornamented with identical scroll patterns). The exact analogy for the geometric vine-pattern on interlacing loops of the strap-end from Öcsöd (No. 18; see Fig. 6:3) is known from Tiszaderzs, grave No. 3 (Kovrig 1975b, 212, Fig. 3). Another distant correspondence was found in Stara Moravica, Serbia (Riczy 1985, 119, Plate LXV:3)⁹. By the natural vine-

⁹ The latest two parallels are further proof for a later dating of similar U-shaped strap-ends. The group from Tiszaderzs display some characteristics of period SS III. The pattern of the strap-end with a wide, short body from Stara Moravica, Serbia, is also identical to those strap-ends with two plates dated to period SS III (for all see Zábójník 1991, 239).

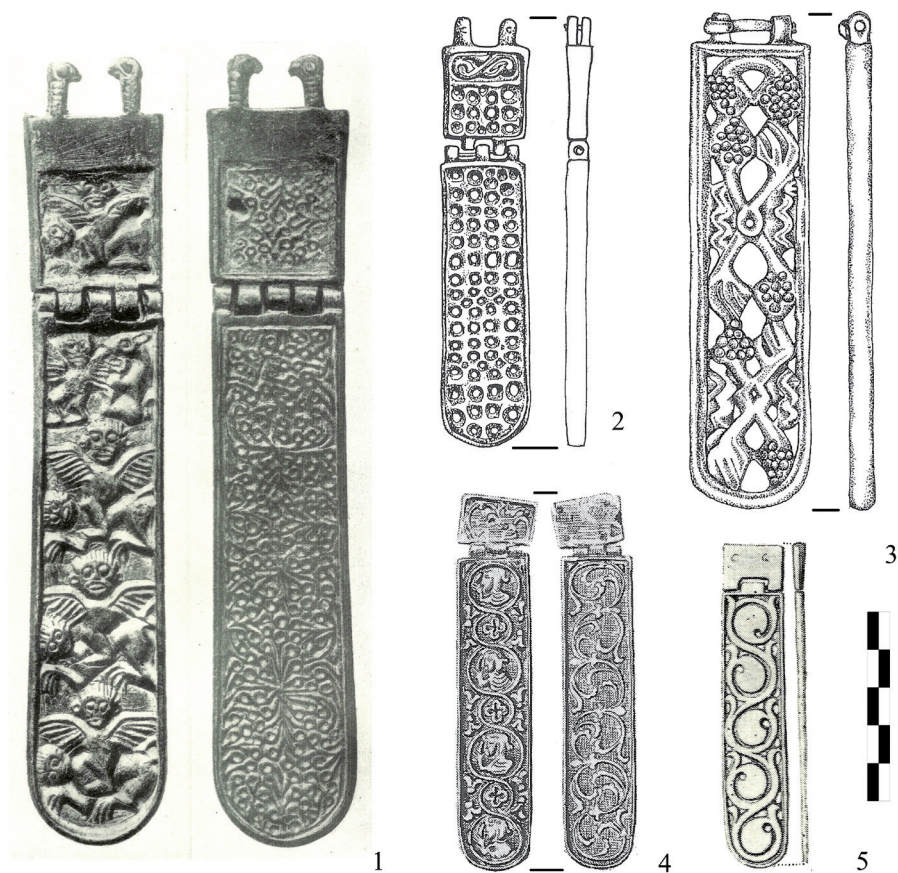


Fig. 6. Selected hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar Period (m — megye; H. — Hungary); computer designed by G. Szenthe.

1 — Pohořelice, okres Zlín, Czech Republic; after N. Fettich (1937, Pl. VII:3–3a); 2 — Perchtoldsdorf, Niederösterreich, Bezirk Mödling, Austria, grave No. 1; after F. Daim (1979, Pl. 19); 3 — Öcsöd-Büdöshalom, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H., grave No. 59; after B. Genito, L. Madaras (2005, Obj. No. 1); 4 — Szentés-Nagyhegy, Csongrád m., H., grave No. 217; after N. Fettich (1965, Fig. 185:1–1a); 5 — Gátér-Vasútállomás, Bács-Kiskun m., H. grave No. 342; after N. Fettich (1965, Fig. 162: 9); 4–5: not to scale.

leaves of the latter the Mediterranean origin of the pattern can be regarded as proven. In different areas of the Carpathian Basin there are more analogies for the scroll pattern of the Grabelsdorf strap-end (No. 8; see Fig. 5:1) which is ornamented also with vine-grapes and palmettes (a collection shown in Kiss 1964; also on a small strap-end e.g. Kecel-Körtefahegy, Cs. Sós 1958, Plate I: 11; see the most beautiful item in Szébeny I grave No. 335, Garam 1975, Fig. 23 and Plate XII:13). The strap-ends from Dolní Dunajovice, Czech Republic, and from grave No. 2302 in Zamárdi are more or less identical (Nos. 6 and 37; see Fig. 5:2–3). The closest analogy for their patterns is known from a shield-shaped belt-mount from Hraničná pri Hornáde (today Kechnec), Slo-

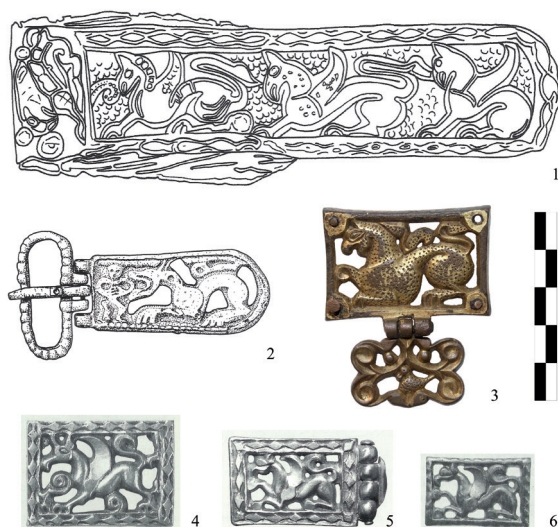


Fig. 7. Selected hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar period; computer designed by G. Szenthe.

1 — Csongrád-Hunyadi Square, Csongrád megye, Hungary, after G. Fancsalszky (2007, 50, Plate 1); 2 — Liesing, Vienna, Austria, grave No. 22; after F. Daim (1990, Fig. 5); 3 — Bratislava-Čunovo (Dunacsúny), okres Bratislava V, Slovakia, grave No. 149 (Photo by G. Szenthe); 4 — Vrap, prefekturë Tirana, Albania; 5 — Velino, oblast Shumen, Bulgaria; 6 — Veliki Preslav, oblast Shumen, Bulgaria (4–6 — after F. Daim [2000, Fig. 9, 5, 17, 19]; 4–6 — not to scale).

vakia, grave No. 119 (Pástor 1971, Fig. 35:30). The poor quality lattice-pattern from Perchtoldsdorf, Austria (No. 19; *cf.* Fig. 6:2) can be identified with the help of the floral geometric palmette patterns of the strap-ends from Szeged-Kundomb, Hungary, grave Nos. 38 and 124 (Salamon, Sebestyén 1995, 14, Plate 5, and 23, Plate 18) constructed on a vertical line of anti-thetic trefoils through some semi-debased ornaments from Zamárdi, grave No. 2274 (Bárdos 2000, 141, Cat. No. 262) and from Bajna (MRT 5, Plate 41: 13).

The U-shaped, socketed strap-ends cast in one piece with or without attachment lugs form such an organic horizon in the Carpathian Basin which is uniform typologically (usually very large openwork specimens), substantially structured ornamentally, and richly applied various complementary decorative elements (mainly different frames). There is ample evidence that its motifs are sustained by a late antique source¹⁰. All in all it can be established that although the hinged items are rare among them, they cannot be separated with-

¹⁰ For example: for the strap-end type with vine scroll ornaments see A. Kiss's repertory from 1964 (Kiss 1964); moreover, some unique cases, without an aim at completeness: Szabény I grave No. 128 (Garam 1975, Fig. 10); Szabény I grave No. 335 (Garam 1975, Fig. 23); Pilismarót-Basaharc, grave No. 148 (Fettich 1965, 50, Fig. 80:1); Regöly, grave No. 175 (Kiss 1984, Plate 84). See also the strap-ends from Csongrád-Máma and Szeged-Kundomb mentioned in the text above.

in the circle — aside from the existence of the hinges — neither in quality nor by minor details. Thus they do not constitute a distinct group set apart from the current types of the material culture of the same period, as the hinged strap-ends with a pointed terminal did during the earlier phases of the Late Avar Period.

Consequently, both formal groups of the hinged strap-ends have a different relationship with the contemporaneous material culture of their own periods of use. The earlier specimens (SS I, partly SS II) in most of the cases show — also next to having hinges — one or more details, which are rare or unique during the same relative chronological phases in the Carpathian Basin. Among objects from SS II (partly SS III), popular types without hinges were decorated with the same, variable floral or floral-geometric ornaments. The socketed, U-shaped strap-ends with or without attachment lugs listed here differ from other strap-ends of the period only in that they have hinges. Otherwise they are identical to the latter in their frames, ornaments, surfacing (gilding or tinning) and their preference for openwork. In other words, the hinge is only one of the late antique characteristics observed on the U-shaped strap-ends.

In future a more extended inquiry into the origins and local adaptation of the hinged strap-ends should be undertaken to explain why the two typological groups were adopted differently in the Carpathian Basin. However, as was noted in the preface, to avoid incongruities, an approach is needed from within the inner processes of the Avar material culture with very modest inductions on the material of the regions more adjacent to or right within the Mediterranean.

A BYZANTINE FORMAL CHARACTERISTIC AND THE AVARS: ON THE WAYS OF DIFFUSION OF HINGED STRAP-ENDS IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

The hinged mechanism of the large strap-ends was observed in the Carpathian Basin also in the 7th century. However, at that time it embellished only the belts worn by women.

In some areas they definitely continued in use till the end of the 'Middle Avar Period' (MA */Mittelawarisch/* II, around to the early 8th century; Daim 1987, Fig. 28; Z á b o j n í k 1991, 234–235; e.g. strap-ends of female belt pendants, Tiszafüred; on the plate strap-ends of the latest 'Middle Avar' Period see G a r a m 2011, Table 2). Among belt-pendants chronologically grouped by É. Garam, in the early group from the cemetery in Tiszafüred (according to É. Garam from the end of the 6th century till the mid–7th century, Early Avar Period) 27 out of 64 strap-ends (cca. 50 percent), while in the late group of G a r a m 2011 (Group II, mid–7th to 8th century) only 3 out of 75 strap-ends were hinged. Now it can be evidently noticed that the range of occurrence of

the hinges decreased after mid-7th century, in around the Middle Avar Period. Regardless of this the mode of use in the Middle Avar Period (MA I and II; see before) is methodically the continuation of the earlier one. The latest hinged strap-ends of the Middle Avar Period endured on women's belt-pendants in cemeteries of two communities which were conservative in costume habits (Csákberény and Tiszafüred; *cf.* Garam 2011, Table II). Nevertheless, the unremarkable number of finds from the Middle Avar Period corresponds well with the quantitative significance of the Late Avar hinged strap-ends.

According to the archaeological evidence there are substantial differences in the regional spread of the objects in the Early and Middle Avar (FA/*Früh-awarisch*/and MA) Periods and the Late Avar Period (*cf.* Fig. 8–9)¹¹, and difference in the costume character (women vs. men). Therefore, a complete cultural caesura appears behind the seemingly formal and chronological continuity, at least within the Carpathian Basin. Because of the cultural break in the local use, the continuity observed in the marginalisation of the hinged type is apparently not related to the Carpathian Basin: the reason for this process can be found rather in the common source area of the Avar hinged strap-ends of the 7th–and 8th centuries AD.

The exact location of this source area is still unknown today. Short-term processes, trends, the echoes of which could be identified in the Carpathian Basin¹² cannot be demonstrated for a while (or can be only with great caution) in the archaeology of the Mediterranean fatherland of the hinged strap-ends; moreover, the Mediterranean also reveals a wide range of regionally varied relative groups during the Early Middle Ages, mostly rooted in Antiquity. Therefore it is unclear how changes in trends of the Avar objects — in this case quantitative and qualitative changes in the use of the hinged strap-ends in the 7th and 8th centuries — are related to the assumed tendencies existing in the source area.

¹¹ The second map (Fig. 9) is based on the list of hinged strap-ends from the 7th century developed by É. Garam, and relies on Garam's dates; see List No. 2.

¹² See the Avar relative chronologies discussed above. As an idiosyncrasy of the Middle European archaeology, the chronological system of the Early Middle Ages in the Carpathian Basin is more a chronology of single object-types only documented in larger quantities and therefore distinctive for a given period. Fortunately, for this case-study, the belt ornaments of men are the basis for a periodization of the Late Avar era. The formal trends varying by chronological phases manifest in consecutive groups on the belt-sets of the Avar: the figural ornamentation of period SS or SPA I-II (partly challenging the chronological systems of J. Zábajník and F. Daim; see Zábajník 1991; Daim, Lippert 1984), geometrical foliated scrolls of the SS III (of J. Zábajník) are 'trends' which are typical for the whole Carpathian Basin and appear on specific mount types characteristic for each period. However, there is some uncertainty as to the duration of these periods (respectively, in the use of the formal trends ruling men's belt ornaments). Although the relative sequence of the phases is the same in every author, their length and the subdivisions depend on their more or less subjective recognition in lack of the absolute chronological limits (for different subdivisions see the partly diverging contents of periods SS III–IV and SPA III a–b of Zábajník 1991 and Daim, Lippert 1984). According to the historically defined end-date of the Avar era the relative periods proposed by the authors are 30–50 years long.

As long as we are unaware as to which Mediterranean region (regions) was (were) the direct source, or how the traffic to the Carpathian Basin operated, we cannot give a precise answer to the questions of the origin and channels of exchange. It is uncertain, moreover, even the opposite might be proven that during the 250 years of the Avar age, the Carpathian Basin was related to the identical region (political formation) and in the same way of that huge area which was influenced by the antique culture. Moreover, the strength and character of the relationships also fluctuated parallel to the changes in politics and culture. The Avar age in the Carpathian Basin is not a static unit, the external relation system of which could be explained with a single pattern: particularly because — in the shaping of a culture (which is tangible by archaeology) — the most inconstant factor is represented by modes of the traffic and communication embedded into different social and political systems (see summarized *Hodges* 1982, 18–21).

Answering the questions of the Mediterranean archaeology is impossible in a view from the margin, that is, from the peripheral culture of the Carpathian Basin. An occasion for a progress appears therefore through acknowledging the precipitations and analysing methods of the connections between the centre and the periphery. Thus, in the second part of the paper I will examine what consequences of the relations between the cultural centre and periphery can be drawn from the incidence of particular details such as hinged strap-ends in Avar culture.

Our further train of thought is based on that aforementioned statement which says that in the earlier group of cast hinged strap-ends there are obviously more details — other than the hinges — which are seen rarely or uniquely among other coeval local finds. As was indicated in the earlier discussion hinges occur more frequently on strap-ends with grooved frames and/or decorative bars during the periods SS I and SS II than on other strap-ends without such ornamentation; nevertheless, none of them seems to have been overly popular among the Avar. The decorative bars and frames are common only on one type of strap-ends with predator friezes (friezes composed by the so-called “scythe-winged” griffins, 6 out of 9 pieces; one out of the later 6 is hinged, see *Fancsalszky* 2007, Plates 13–14). It cannot be a pure coincidence that the griffin with scythe-shaped wings is the only stylized griffin-type during the first half of the 8th century to have direct Mediterranean-Byzantine analogies (Vrap-Velino-type finds, see below in details)¹³. Similarly, unique designs are also accumulated on the strap-ends from Gyód and from grave No. 125 in Tiszafüred (Nos. 9. and 30; *cf.* Fig. 2:1–2): next to the hinges they feature beads and twisted frames.

¹³ It may be only a coincidence in research that this is the only strap-end type which has a parallel outside the Carpathian Basin. A strap-end and a belt-mount from Trentino (*Ciurletti* 2000, 181) are absolutely identical to objects mentioned above. Nevertheless they are stray finds originating from the Avar context.

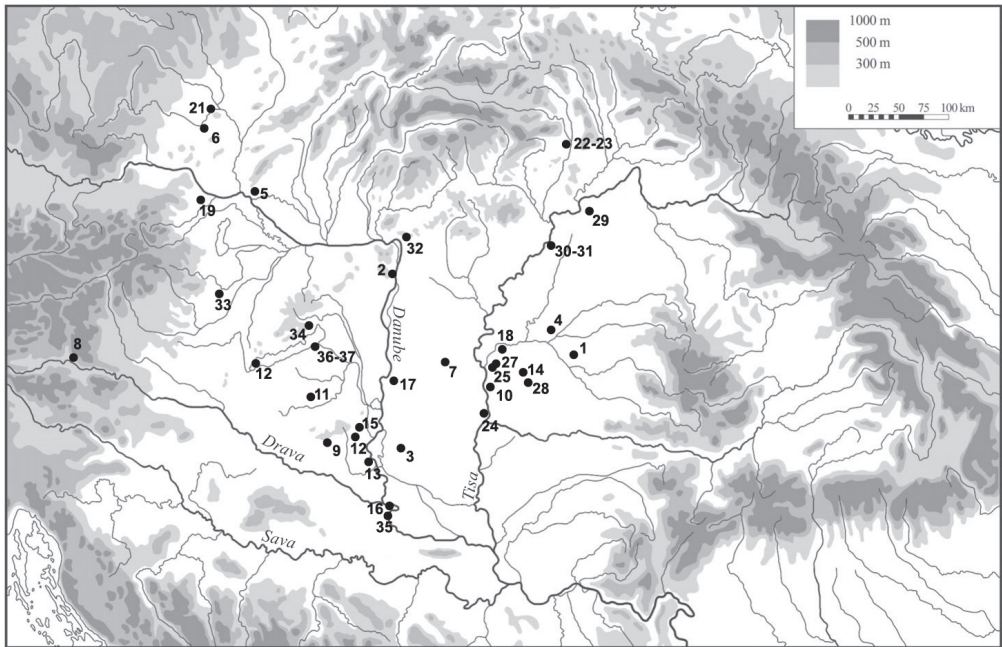


Fig. 8. Carpathian Basin — regional distribution of the Late Avar hinged strap-ends. Numbers on the map correspond to the numbers in List No. 1; drawn by J. Jordan and G. Szenthe.

As has been demonstrated, simpler variants of these forms were quite common on the Avar belts. Thus the morphological variants, which can be explained by the direct effect of the Mediterranean ornamental tradition, are present also on those artefacts which are embedded in the first half of the Late Avar culture; but they appear at most a few — and never in large amounts at a time.

This picture is only embellished with those objects and sets which bear simultaneously more characteristics atypical in the Carpathian Basin. They emphasize the significance of the concentrated emergence of Late Antique shapes. The phenomenon exists entirely on the strap-end from Mártély, Hungary, and on its belt-set (Fig. 4). The standardized elaboration of the belt-set in the first phase of the Late Avar Period (SS I–II) is an exception (the only analogy known to the author is the set from grave No. 32 at Szentés-Nagyhegy; *cf.* Csallány 1962, 445–446, Plate XV; see also below). A further characteristic of the belt from Mártély is that it had two different types of mount — a rectangular and a rosette-shaped one. An exact parallel dated to late 7th century is published from Komani culture, Albania (Kruja, grave No. 6, Nalbani 1999–2000, belt reconstruction: Table 1). On the evidence of this analogy it can be suggested that the use of two different mounts alternating on

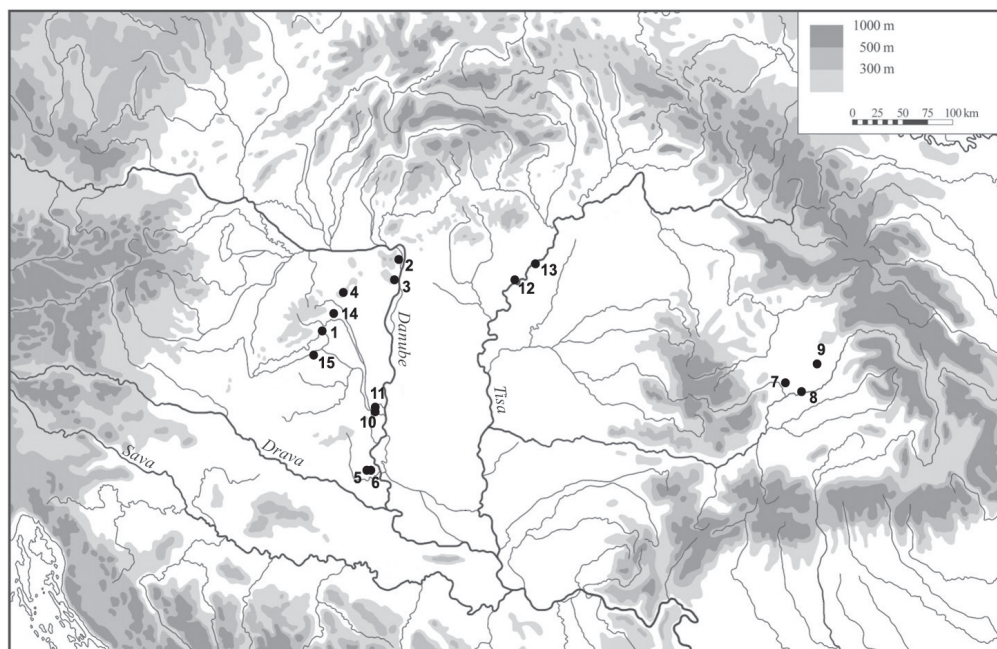


Fig. 9. Carpathian Basin — regional distribution of hinged strap-ends during the 7th century. Numbers on the map correspond to the numbers in List No. 2; drawn by J. Jordan and G. Szenthe.

the strap was introduced to the Mediterranean periphery from the Byzantine military belts¹⁴.

The beaded frames and the thick gilding of the belt-set from Mártély are also uncommon during the first phase of the Late Avar Period (for the later, see Kiss 1995, especially 101). The buckle, the mounts and the back of the strap-end from Mártély are all ornamented with identical foliated scrolls with hollow leafs. Their one and only relatively close Avar counterparts are the foliated tendrils of the already mentioned belt-set from grave No. 32 in Szentés-Nagyhegy (Csallány 1962, 445–446, Plate XV). The latter are even closer to the antecedents of the foliated scrolls and palmette patterns outside the Carpathian Basin than to the one from Mártély, though this is chronologically and geographically nearer. The direct analogies for the leafage and scroll

¹⁴ The only parallel in the Carpathian Basin known to the author is a belt-set from Szentés-Felsőcsordajárás (Fettich 1929, Plate IV). This set displays a certain degree of uniqueness in the local culture of the same period (SS I). Uncommon characteristics are concentrated in it, like the beaded frames on the mounts and the twisted ones on the strap-ends and 'naturalistic' griffin figures (maned animals with feathered wings depicted faithfully with anatomy, growing out of the shoulder of the beasts) as well as the mounts of two different types attached on one belt. For a similar trial reconstruction based on the belt-mounts from Vrap, Albania, see in Totev, Pellevina 2012, Fig. 2:1.

pattern lead to the coeval Byzantine, Italian, Lombardic and late Merovingian vegetal ornaments¹⁵. Finally, the author of this paper has made an attempt to interpret the scene on the strap-end, taking into account two late antique (at the turn of 6th and 7th century, the beginning of 7th century) ivory carvings (Capture of the Ceryneian Hind by Heracles; see Szenthe 2013, 152–153) entirely lacking other analogies amongst Avar findings.

So, although certain elements of the belt-set from Mártély (scroll patterns of the rosettes, buckle and strap-end as a complex ornamental structure, the tendril ornament and the griffin on the small strap-end, and the shape of the mounts and the strap-end; see Fig. 4) relate to other artefacts from the Carpathian Basin¹⁶, all in all the design of the set as a whole can be explained only by invoking external sources.

Therefore, the concentrated emergence of otherwise locally unusual (Byzantine) formal characteristics may determine such objects (or sets of objects) which were influenced directly by Mediterranean formal traditions. No wonder that these objects are in some aspects — but mostly not in the subtleties of the minor details — connected to the Avar material culture of the same period, too; either because the latter determined their manufacture as local products, or, on the contrary, because they influenced the common level material culture as objects in relatively good quality and with exciting new forms and skills.

The hinges and the decorative frames on strap-ends are solutions which did not or could not become popular in the Late Avar environment, although they can also be found among more widespread object types. All the same, the direct impact of the Mediterranean (Byzantium?) must have been of limited scope in the 8th-century Carpathian Basin. The predominant manner of the concomitant of the solutions originated directly from the Mediterranean (e.g.

¹⁵ For palmettes on rectangular mounts see the model from Ephesos (Riegl 1905; 1923); with leaves engraved with a 'dot-and-comma' motives see a Byzantine 'half-crescent' earring from the 7th century *cf.* Temple (ed.) 1990, Cat. No. 10.

For the hollow leaves and leaves divided differently with several variations of the 'dot-and-comma' motives see also: the Late Merovingian Warnebert reliquary in Beromünster and the one from Utrecht, Haseloff 1984, Fig. 1–2, 12); a gold foil cross from Sontheim a.d. Brenz (Haseloff 1975, 58–59, Fig. 27:a–b, Plate 26:3). In Italy see the gold foil cross from Stabio and a dagger mount from Castel Trosino (e.g. Werner 1974, Fig. 14:a–b). The Late Merovingian artefacts were discussed by O. v. Hessen because of their identical scroll-work pattern as items of a uniform horizon spread both in Italy and north of the Alps but originating in a Byzantine milieu (v. Hessen 1964, 208–209, Plate X).

¹⁶ For parallels for the involved scrolls of the rosettes and the large strap-end see: Košice-Šebastovce grave No. 86 (Budinský-Krička, Točík 1991, 23–24, Plate X); Ócsöd-Büdöshalom grave No. 32 (Genito, Madaras 2005, Obj. Nos. 1–29); Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street grave No. 451 (Rosner 1999, 61, Plate 32); Tiszafüred-Majoros grave Nos. 536/a, 692, 1139, 1214 (Garam 1995, 71, Plate 100, 88, Plate 112; 134, Plate 152; 144, Plate 160); Zwölfaxing grave No. 76a (Lippert 1969, 137–138, Plate 31); from an unknown site (Hampel 1905, 336, Plate 257:7) and Vienna 13-Unter St. Veit stray find (Daim 1979, 62–66, Plates 4–5); the shapes of the mounts and strap-ends are the most widespread types in the contemporary Carpathian Basin, although in simpler variants, see e.g. Zábójník 1991.

hinges and frames, see earlier discussion)¹⁷ but the marginality of their occurrence, together or separately, in the same place both intimate their restricted influence. The finds typochronologically dated to the first half of the 8th century were spread in the whole Carpathian Basin in many pieces, thus their favourite types are simple without any additional decorations. The almost standardised forms of these artefacts¹⁸, their preference for definite figural motifs¹⁹ shaped uniformly²⁰, attest the evolution of an autonomous ornamental style in the Carpathian Basin.

The development of this local trend is ambiguous. There are only a few and indirect data about the external sources and what the own achievements of the Avar environment itself were (see e.g. Daim 2001; 2010). Therefore this issue deserves more discussion if only for the sake of placing the belt-set from Mártyély.

The artefacts from the Mediterranean, on which is seen a substantially larger number of additional decorative elements than on their parallels from the Carpathian Basin also have on them figural ornamentation the resemblance of which to the discussed Avar objects cannot be neglected. This is most conspicuous on the Balkan finds attributed to the Vrap horizon (Vrap: Werner 1986, Plate 25:13a; Velino and Veliki Preslav: Stanilov 2006, 95, Fig. 5; see Fig. 7:4–6), and their direct parallel, the large strap-end from Csongrád-Hunyadi Square (Hunyadi Square, Szalontai 1994; *cf.* Fig. 7:1). In all cases the objects are framed with a row of lozenges. The vegetal hook in front of the first griffin on the strap-end from Csongrád (Szalontai 1994, Fig. 1) is present on the rectangular belt-mount from Vrap where the foreleg of the beast leans against the vertical border of the mount (Werner 1986, Plate 25:13a; Stanilov 2006, 96, Fig. 5:1–2). The large strap-end from Csongrád is gilded and the background of the pattern is covered with round punch marks. The joint application of the gilding and punching of the background is unique during the first phase of the Late Avar Period (SS I). The scythe-winged griffins on this specimen are far more elaborate than on objects typical for local production. The only griffin which can be paralleled with this one in quality is the one with a punched body seen on a gilded mount from Bratislava-Čunovo, Slovakia, grave No. 149 (Fig. 7:3; see Sőtér 1895, 113; mistakenly referring to Zamárdi in Bálint 2010a, 150, Plate 15): a vegetal hook replaced the foreleg on this representation, too. Another unique characteristic is the avian figure fit in the palmette on the pendant of the mount.

¹⁷ Other ornamental elements like chased lugs of the hinges also belong to the range of the direct Mediterranean-Byzantine impact, see Kiss 2001a, list 8.

¹⁸ Concave-sided socketed strap-ends with pointed terminal, rectangular studs, Zábójník 1991, 236–237.

¹⁹ Quadruped beasts and griffins: Zábójník 1991, 236–237; for the strap-ends see especially finds in Fancsalszky 2007; for the beasts on the rectangular belt-mounts see Stadler 1990.

²⁰ Relatively high relief used for only special elements of the figures (e.g. nails, mouth/beak, eyes), but avoids a naturalistic-detailed representation of the body.

It is notable that the number of objects which in their iconography do not follow the popular types of the Carpathian Basin is even smaller than the number of artefacts — also rare — characterised only by atypical formal solutions, like hinges and other decorative elements discussed above. In general, the iconographical independence of an object or an ensemble from the Avar material culture was always joined by several other solutions atypical in the local environment, just as in the case of the grave B at Mártély. Characteristically, their context is predominantly oriented to outside the Carpathian Basin (beside the findings of Mártély, Bratislava-Čunovo, Csongrád, Szentes-Nagyhegy grave No. 32, a belt-set from Szentes-Felsőcsordajárás [see footnote No. 15 and also F e t t i c h 1929, Plate IV] belongs to the group of objects dated to the first phase of the Late Avar Period, SS I–II).

The simpler objects (possibly because there was a preference for them?) were used widely in the Avar environment. In this context, the small group of artefacts under analysis informs about the high level of needs and external relations of their creators — or rather, of the customers and users. On the basis of the parallels listed it seems that *the adopted forms are sourced from the Mediterranean-Byzantine, Italian and Late Merovingian elite material culture*. Affiliation with the elite culture of the first decades of the Late Avar era seems to be reasonable at least for the high-quality gilded belt from Mártély (The other belt-set, from grave No. 32 in Szentes-Nagyhegy which most appropriately fits into this context is published just on a single photo of not very good quality, see C s a l l á n y 1964, Plate XXXX; The gilded objects are discussed in this context in K i s s 1995, 99. For a definition of elite and the importance of its relationship to other elites see e.g. C a n e p a 2010; E g g, Q u a s t 2009). Thus the belt-set and its hinged strap-end must be interpreted as proof of the communications of the Late Avar elite.

Some other finds indicate a second layer of contacts between the Mediterranean and the Carpathian Basin. There is one single object among the hinged strap-ends which not only shows the effect of a Mediterranean material culture but also proves its presence in the Carpathian Basin. The large strap-end of unknown provenance formerly in the Fleissig collection (F e t t i c h 1937, Plate VII:1; F a n c s a l s z k y 2007, 103, Plate 57:1), or to be exact, from Vasasszonyfa (the identification of the site see K i s s 2001a, 434) is unique in the Avar environment (Fig. 4:3). The closest counterpart of its ornamentation is a long U-shaped cast bronze buckle with attachment lugs from Liesing, Vienna (M o s s l e r 1975, 87, Plate VIII:1; D a i m 1990, Fig. 5; K i s s 2001b, Plate 5:2). The buckle from Vienna is related to a type of copper-alloy cast buckles with attachment lugs on which the same dog-like beast is designed without a human figure (D a i m 1990, Fig. 1–7; K i s s 2001b, 223–224; S c h u l z e - D ö r r l a m m 2010, 125–129). The iconography of these buckles of simple, geometrized elements is — at the same time — the closest analogy for the beast on the large strap-end from Vasasszonyfa. The twisted or beaded bars (wings?) on the hu-

man's shoulders, which are linked vertically to the frame of the strap-end, can also be found on the long U-shaped buckle from Debrecen-Ondód (the two objects are also linked by a double-bar frame: Kiss 2012, 257): G. Kiss identified the latter as an object of Byzantine origin (Kiss 2012) antedating the earliest cast Avar artefacts (MA II). G. Kiss's chronology is in accordance with that of the long U-shaped buckle from Liesing, Vienna given by F. Daim and M. Schulze-Dörrlamm (Daim 1990, 286–287; Schulze-Dörrlamm 2010, 126–127, 357–358).

Contrary to the fact that the large strap-end may have parallels — through the buckle from Debrecen — with Byzantine artefacts brought into the Carpathian Basin during the period MA II-SS I still, in its form it corresponds not to objects datable to the beginning of the Late Avar age but to those U-shaped strap-ends which originate during the late phase of period SS II. This morphological connection is verified by the appearance of the twisted part fixed over the shoulder, in this case, in the form of wings of the beasts riding on a human-headed figure on the hinged large strap-end of same shape from Pohorelice, Czech Republic (No. 21, Fig. 7:1; Kiss 2012, 263, Table 7). In the light of the dating of the strap-end from Pohorelice²¹ and comparing it with the analogous motifs of the buckle from Debrecen-Ondód, it can be stated that the correspondence in the Avar environment is not chronological but cultural, and subsequent upon the derivation of the three objects from Byzantine culture.

The custom of wearing two-part belt-sets can be documented to the north of the Alps and in the Carpathian Basin only till the turn of 6th and 7th century (Martin 1996, 354) and in the latter area by a very small number of finds during the 7th century (Martin 2005, 199–200; Pöllath 2002, Fig. 34). Such belts were worn in their Mediterranean-Byzantine fatherland within much wider chronological frames. The variants typical for the beginning of the 7th century (Martin 1996, 354–355, Fig. 5) are connected there through a set dated to the second half of the 7th century (grave No. 50, Grosetto, cast bronze buckle with a long and narrow strap-end; see Riemer 2000, 141–142, Plate 62:4–6) to some 9th–10th century examples (for the latest see e.g. Schulze-Dörrlamm 2009, Fig. 88:1–2). The strap-end from the Fleissig collection may have belonged to an original Byzantine (two-piece) belt-set dating to between the second half of the 7th century and the turn of 7th and 8th century, or could have been an exact Avar copy of a Byzantine object.

The quality of the Hungarian strap-end and its equivalents is not outstanding, their material is simple copper-alloy just like those analogous pieces in Byzantine territory; the intercourse with the elites demonstrated earlier for

²¹ On the basis of the analogies the end of the SS II, see above; for the parallels to the socket with the head of a? bird of prey see rather SS III, Zábajník 1991, type No. 50; about the long, narrow large strap-end with geometrical scroll (with other mounts dated to SS II, with rectangular, griffin mounts and a buckle ornamented with scroll-work pattern: Szentes-Kaján grave No. 321 [Korek 1943–44, 36–37, Plate XXIX:1]).

the set from Mártély is not apparent here. Therefore the provenance of the strap-end from Vasasszonyfa on the western edge of the Carpathian Basin reconstructed by G. Kiss (2001a) must be considered while looking for the channels of mediation that must be present behind the typological similarity.

The direct interregional relations between the western periphery of the Avar settlement area in the Carpathian Basin and the neighbouring Mediterranean border regions have been posited by many of researchers till now (Vinski 1974; Daim 2000; Zábójník 2000; 2007, in case of a buckle from Keszthely with a button terminal and a body framed with double-bars (!), probably with a provincial-Byzantine origin Kiss 2005). Though there are some hinged strap-ends with geometrical patterns typical for the Avar material culture from periods SS I and SS II which prove an impact of the interregional relations reaching the western border of the Carpathian Basin. Neither hinged strap-ends from Keszthely and Kölked have counterparts in the Carpathian Basin, moreover, their patterns arranged with pelta-shape parts unambiguously have antique origins. The similarity to the Mediterranean-Byzantine objects is also verified with the button terminals of the strap-end from Keszthely and the one from Šebastovce, Slovakia with a unique geometrical ornamentation (for the objects with button terminals see Kiss 1999; for the Šebastovce strap-end see Budinský-Krička, Točík 1991, Plate XXXV). The counterparts of the find from Császártöltés (Fig. 4:6), ornamented with a row of band loops, are also typical for the area to the west of the Danube (Zábójník 2000, 348–349, Fig. 13–16; 2007, 23–24, Fig. 10–11).

Thus, a second level of contacts with the Mediterranean in the first half of the 8th century can be identified in these latter cases which are spread in the border regions of the Carpathian Basin, but mostly in Transdanubia. The media for their formation most likely would have been direct interregional relations between the Carpathian Basin and the closest Mediterranean peripheries.

Compared to the concave-sided forms with a pointed terminal (SS I), next to chronological discrepancies the U-shaped strap-ends with antique ornaments from period SS II also have entirely different characteristics of usage in the Carpathian Basin. In case of the latter, regional-qualitative groups cannot be observed; instead, their characteristics are that some of them appeared on the periphery of the Avar settlement area, sometimes outside of it (Dolní Dunajovice, Grabelsdorf, Pohořelice, Nos. 6, 8, 21; cf. Fig. 7:1–2, 6; for their cultural environment see Szameit 1993; Eichert 2010). While the artefacts from Grabelsdorf, Austria, and Dolní Dunajovice, Czech Republic, in their form fit perfectly the group of these objects spread in the Carpathian Basin, the strap-end from Pohořelice, Czech Republic (mostly its floral ornamentation, see Fettich 1937, Plate VII:3a) is not dependent in its decoration on Avar finds. With a lack of other parallels it cannot be decided whether we can see such artefacts which developed under the Avar material culture and as their peripheral phenomena belonged to an environment partly independent from

it. There is an alternative interpretation as well. The westernmost finds can belong to an archaeological culture which, though not connected to the Avar material culture developed side by side of it, and is affected by the late antique Mediterranean culture directly forming also the contemporary Late Avar finds.

CONCLUSIONS

The hinged variation of strap-ends appeared starting from the Roman Period in the early medieval cultures in contexts influenced by the antique tradition of the Mediterranean. Next to proving a Byzantine provenance in general it is also possible to draw conclusions on the nature of the connections between the Mediterranean and the Carpathian Basin from the patterns of the local use in the latter territory in the 7th–8th centuries AD.

Accordingly, there are no signs of internal continuity in the Avar material culture in the use of hinged strap-ends between the 7th (Early and Middle Avar Periods, FA and MA I–II) and the 8th centuries (Late Avar Period). Because of the break in the adaptation of hinged strap-ends at transition from one period to the next it is reasonable to conclude that the Late Avar Period had its own, contemporaneous contacts with the Mediterranean. The limited number of these pieces implies the shallowness of these direct connections, and that they were available exclusively to some social strata or regional groups.

There were at least two levels of contacts between the Mediterranean and the Carpathian Basin in the first half of the Late Avar Period (SS I–II). The characteristics of the Mártély find can be evaluated as a sign for communication between elites where such demands were satisfied which could not be satisfied by drawing on internal sources. Accordingly, the first level of the contacts manifests itself in the context of a material culture of relative excellence by the appearance of locally atypical elements. In this case, the geographical distance was secondary to the qualitative aspect as a matter of communication. Although in theory regular long-range communications could have been sustained between social groups on a high level of demand over considerable distances, the archaeological evidence is sufficient mostly just for diagnosing the contacts by random emergence of the same formal elements in substantially different social-economic structures (e.g. the case of the hollow leafs in Avar, Merovingian and Byzantine contexts, see Footnotes No. 15–16).

The strap-end from Vasasszonyfa formerly in the Fleissig collection and the concave-sided pieces with geometrical patterns from Transdanubia and some other finds from the northern part of the Carpathian Basin have no contacts with the typical Avar style of period SS I–II (Late Avar animal style). On the evidence of parallels — mostly the same object types — the latter arrived in the Carpathian Basin through contacts with the nearby Mediterranean border region.

The former regional and social differences do not characterize the later long U-shaped strap-ends where hinges (period SS II, partly SS III) are just one of the Mediterranean-Byzantine forms shaping the object type. The influences from the Mediterranean were relatively strong compared to the former period, according to the relative widening in the spectrum of antique Mediterranean forms used in the Carpathian Basin. After the changing dynamics in the use of the hinged strap-ends a permanence of the links between the Avars and the neighbouring world must be supposed.

List No. 1. Hinged strap-ends of the Late Avar Period (m — megye; H. — Hungary). List of finds.

1. Békés 1/XIX, Békés m., H.;
MRT 10, Plate 88:4.
2. Budapest IX-Wekerle-telep, H., grave No. 35;
Nagy 1998b, 66, Plate 52; Fig. 1:5.
3. Császártöltés, Bács-Kiskun m., H.;
Unpublished (Hungarian National Museum); Fig. 3:3.
4. Dévaványa-Köleshalom, Békés m., H., grave No. 11;
Kovrig 1975, 126, Fig. 4; Fig. 1:2.
5. Devínská Nová Ves (Dévényújfalu), okres Bratislava IV, Slovakia, grave
No. 760;
Eisner 1952, Fig. 82:5.
6. Dolní Dunajovice, okres Břeclav, Czech Republic;
Klanica 1972, 6, Plate 2:1; Fig. 5:2.
7. Gátér-Vasútállomás, Bács-Kiskun m., H., grave No. 342;
Fettich 1965, Fig. 162:9; Fig. 6:5.
8. Grabelsdorf bei St. Kanzian am Klopeiner See, Kärnten, Bezirk Völkermarkt,
Austria, grave find;
Szameit 1993, Plate 1:20; Fig. 5:1.
9. Gyód-Máriahegy, Baranya m., H., grave No. 38;
Kiss 1977, 40, Plate VII; Fig. 2:1.
10. Hódmezővásárhely, Mártély-Csanyi-part, Csongrád m., H., grave 'B';
Hampel 1905, Plates 80-81; Fig. 4:3.
11. Kaposvár-Toponár, Somogyi m., H., grave No. 40;
Simonova 1976, Plate 39.
12. Keszthely-Dobogó, Zala m., H., stray find;
Lipp 1884, Plate IV: 74; Fig. 3:1.
13. Kölked-Feketekapu B, Baranya m., H., grave No. 419;
Kiss 2001, Plate 79; Fig. 3:2.
14. Nagymágocs-Ótompahát, Csongrád m., H., grave No. 93;
unpublished; see Erdélyi 1966, 31; Fancsalszky 2007, 51, Plate 10:
7; Fig. 1:4.
15. Nagypall I-Határi-dűlő, Baranya m., H., grave No. 16;
Kiss 1977, Plate XXVIII; Fig. 2:3.

16. Novi Slankamen-Čarevci, Sremski okrug, Serbia, grave No. 20;
Janković 2003, 101, Fig. 8 (after Fancsalszky 2007, Plate 3:5);
Fig. 2, 4.
17. Ordas-Dunapart, Bács-Kiskun m., H., grave No. 5;
Hampel 1905, Plates 80–81; Fig. 3:8.
18. Öcsöd-Büdöshalom, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H.; grave No. 59;
Genito, Madaras 2005, Obj. No. 1–14; Fig. 6:3.
19. Perchtoldsdorf, Niederösterreich, Bezirk Mödling, grave No. 1, Austria;
Daim 1979, 72–74, Plate 19; Fig. 6:2.
20. Perniö (today Salo), Finland, stray find;
Fettich 1930, Fig. 1.
21. Pohorelice, okres Brno-venkov, Czech Republic;
Fettich 1937, Plate VII:3–3a; Dekán 1972, Fig. 109; Profantová
1992, No. 36, Plate 33, B; Fancsalszky 2007, 102, Plate 55:4; Fig. 6:1.
22. Šebastovce-Lapiše, okres Košice, Slovakia, grave No. 131;
Budinský-Krička, Točík 1991, Plate XVIII.
23. Šebastovce-Lapiše, okres Košice, Slovakia, grave No. 243;
Budinský-Krička, Točík 1991, Plate XXXV.
24. Szeged-Sövényháza, Csongrád m., H., grave find;
Hampel 1905, II/117–118, Plate 97:12; Fig. 1:1.
25. Szentcsanak, Kettőshalom, Csongrád m., H., grave 'C';
unpublished; Csallány 1933–34, 226–227, Plate LXVII:5; Fancsalszky
2007, 85, Plate 46:7; Fig. 3: 4.
26. Szentcsanak-Lapistó, Csongrád m., H., grave find;
Erdélyi 1966, 37 (identical to the strap-end from Nagymágocs [Nr. 14],
verso).
27. Szentcsanak-Nagyhegy, Csongrád m., H., grave No. 217;
unpublished; Csallány 1933–34, 226, Plate LXVII:4; Fettich 1965,
112, Fig. 185:1–1a; Fig. 6:4.
28. Székkutas-Kápolnadűlő, Csongrád m.; H., grave No. 38;
B. Nagy 2003, 21, Fig. 15; Fig. 1:6.
29. Tiszaeszlár-Kunsírpárt, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg m., H., grave No. 7;
unpublished; Fancsalszky 2007, Plate 10:4; Fig. 1:4.
30. Tiszafüred-Majoros, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H., grave No. 125;
Garam 1995, 23, Plate 68; Fig. 2:2.
31. Tiszafüred-Majoros, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H., grave No. 190;
Garam 1995, 30, Plate 73; Fig. 1:7.
32. Vác, Pest m., H., stray find;
Hampel 1905, 96-97; Fig. 3:9.
33. Vasasszonyfa, Vas m., H., stray find;
Fleissig collection; Fettich 1937, Plate VII:1–1a; Kiss 2001a; Fig. 3:7.
34. Veszprém-Jutas, Sereomb, Veszprém m., H., grave No. 28;
Fettich 1929, Plate X:1; Rhé-Fettich 1931, Plate I:1; Fig. 3:5.

35. Vojka, Sremski okrug, Serbia;
Dimitriević, Kovačević, Vinski 1962, 98, Fig. 2.
36. Zamárdi-Rétiföldek, Somogy m., H., grave No. 805;
Bárdos, Garam 2009, 111, Plate 213; Fig. 3:6.
37. Zamárdi-Rétiföldek, Somogy m., H., grave No. 2302;
Unpublished; Fig. 5:3.

List No. 2. Selected hinged strap-ends from the 7th century (m — megye; H. — Hungary). List of finds; after É. Garam (2011, Table I–II)

1. Balatonfűzfő, Veszprém m., H.
2. Budakalász-Dunapart (2 items), Komárom-Esztergom m., H.
3. Budapest-Fehérvári Street, H.
4. Csákberény (5 items), Fejér m., H.
5. Kölked-Feketekapu A, Baranya m., H.
6. Kölked-Feketekapu B, Baranya m., H.
7. Noşlac (Marosfalva), judeţul Alba, Romania.
8. Vereşmort (Marosveresmart), judeţul Alba, Romania.
9. Band (Mezőbánd), judeţul Mureş, Romania.
10. Szekszárd-Bogyiszlói Street (2 items), Tolna m., H.
11. Szekszárd-Palánk, Tolna m., H.
12. Tiszabura, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H.
13. Tiszafüred-Majoros, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H.
14. Várpalota-Gimnázium, Veszprém m., H.
15. Zamárdi-Rétiföldek (5 items), Somogy m., H.

From the 'Middle Avar' Period: Csákberény (Fejér m., H.), Tiszafüred-Majoros (2 items; Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok m., H.; see: 4 and 13 on Fig. 9).

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Abbreviations

- CAPH Cemeteries of the Avar Period (568–829) in Hungary, Budapest.
- MAA Monumenta Avarorum Archaeologica, Budapest.
- MRT 5 *Magyarország régészeti topográfiája 5. Komárom megye régészeti topográfiája. Esztergom és a dorogi járás*, I. Torma (ed.), Budapest 1979.
- SAA Studien zur Archäologie der Awaren, Wien.
- TRW The Transformation of the Roman World, Leiden-Boston-Köln.

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