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Periferija kao ključ; Razumijevanje interakcija i identiteta kroz arheološka svjedočanstva; Primjer dvaju kasnoavarskih grobalja u zapadnom Srijemu, Hrvatska

Zapadni Srijem, dio nekadašnje kasnorimske provincije Pannonia Sirmiensis, tradicionalno se smatra dijelom južne i jugoistočne periferije kasnog Avarskog Kaganata. Riječ je o mikroregiji s najvećim brojem arheološki istraženih kasnoavarskih groblja u Hrvatskoj, u kojoj niz arheoloških nalaza ukazuje na mogućnost neke vrste kasnoantičkog/mediteranskog kulturnog utjecaja. To se može promatrati kroz naznake „preživljavanja“ nekih vještina ili djelatnosti te veću prijemчивost (nekih) zajednica za mediteransku „modu“, dok povijesne okolnosti dopuštaju teorije o postojećim komunikacijskim putovima između ovog dijela periferije i bizantske sfere. U isto vrijeme, činjenica da je zapadni Srijem periferno, granično područje Kaganata djelomično objašnjava zašto su njegovi stanovnici osjetljiviji na vanjske utjecaje, što se očituje u razlikama u običajima i u odstupanju u samoreprezentaciji žena od uobičajenih standarda tog doba. Kasnoavarodobni repertoar možda se može objasniti kao svojevrsno prikrivanje pravih identiteta tih zajednica zajedničkim objektima samoreprezentacije najpoznatijeg kulturnog izričaja tog vremena, onog kasnih Avara.

Ključne riječi: kasnoavarsko doba, zapadni Srijem, Privlaka – Gole njive, mediteranski kulturni utjecaj.

Periphery as the key: Understanding interactions and identities through archaeological records; example of two Late Avar-age cemeteries in western Syrmia, Croatia

Western Syrmia, a region once part of the former late Roman province Pannonia Sirmiensis, is traditionally regarded as part of the southern-southeastern periphery of the Late Avar Khaganate. Western Syrmia is a micro-region with the highest number of archaeologically researched Late Avar cemeteries in Croatia, where a series of archaeological finds

suggests the possibility of some kind of Late Antique/Mediterranean cultural influence. This may be observed through the “survival” of certain activities and/or skills, and a greater receptivity of (certain?) communities to the Mediterranean “fashion”, while historical circumstances allow for theories about existing communication routes between this peripheral area of the Khaganate and the Byzantine sphere. At the same time, the peripheral nature of Western Syrmia in the border area of the Khaganate partially explains why its inhabitants were more receptive to external influences and cultural differences, and why there were deviations in the expected self-representation of local women from the common one. In fact, the Late Avar cultural repertoire may have been a deliberate effort to “conceal” the true identities of these communities, by using shared objects of self-representation of the well-known and dominant cultural expression of the time—the one of the Late Avars.

Keywords: Late Avar period, Western Syrmia, Privlaka-Gole njive, Mediterranean cultural influence.

Razdoblje antike možda je zaista, zahvaljujući kulturnom ujedinjenju mediteranskog i šireg prostora u jedinstvenu sferu, koju danas možemo tumačiti kao globaliziranu, ostavilo dugotrajan trag i nastavilo utjecati na kulture i materijalna i duhovna kretanja još dugo nakon što je antika kao takva, uključujući starogrčku i rimsku civilizaciju, postala povijesna uspomena bez mogućnosti ponovnog oživljavanja. Prije svega, putem mediteranskog prostora utjecaj antike kroz različite vidove evolucije, preživljava i prolazi svojevrsnu metamorfozu postajući dijelom političkih, materijalno-kulturnih i duhovnih sfera koje oblikuju ne samo rani već i čitavo razdoblje srednjeg vijeka. Posebno se dobro taj besmrtni duh svojevrsnog kontinuiteta, koji uvijek gradi novo, očituje u procesu kasnoantičke sfere. Ona svoj utjecaj zadržava i u velikom dijelu kontinentalne Europe te kao značajna kulturna odrednica obilježava i nove kulturne identitete takozvanih „barbarskih“ plemena i budućih naroda, ne samo u vremenu nakon pada Zapadnog Rimskog Carstva već i u ranom srednjem vijeku te u vrijeme začetka ideje današnjih nacionalnih država zapadne i srednje Europe. To posebno dobro ilustriraju dva primjera: Karlo Veliki i njegov koncept oživljavanja karakteristika i veličine antike unutar svoje vlasti i države te avarsko doba i avarski kulturni krug.

Sam intenzitet utjecaja, vezan za pojavnost izravnih i neizravnih kontakata (vanjskih utjecaja) i snagu identiteta romaniziranog stanovništva koje Avari zatječu u dijelovima Karpatske kotline, ali i za razinu moći izvorišta kulturološkog utjecaja, mijenjao se tijekom avarskog doba:

- U ranoavarskom dobu Avari naseljavaju područje u čijim je dijelovima snažno prisutna kasnoantička kulturna tradicija, područje Keszthelya i Pečuha (*Sopiana*), dok druga područja centralne i istočne Panonije naseljavaju u manjoj mjeri. Na tom području prisutni su i elementi germanske, a uskoro i slavenske provenijencije.¹ Negdje oko sredine 7. stoljeća započinje proces homogenizacije avarodobnog kulturnog izričaja, koji će postati glavna odrednica kasnoavarskog doba, dok elementi drugih identiteta postupno nestaju ili potpuno iščezavaju.
- Sve do 626. godine (neuspješna opsada Konstantinopola) Avari i Bizant održavaju stalne diplomatske odnose i izmjenjuju poslanstva (uključujući i diplomatske darove). Istodobno, Ava-

The period of Antiquity, marked by the cultural unification of the Mediterranean and its broader regions into one sphere that today might be considered a globalized one, perhaps truly left a lasting mark and continued to exert influence on cultures, material and spiritual movements, long after Antiquity itself, including ancient Greek and the Roman Empire sphere, became a historical memory with no possibility of revival.

Namely, the influence of Antiquity, particularly through the Mediterranean region, evolved, endured and underwent a form of metamorphosis in various aspects, becoming an integral part of the subsequent political, material-cultural and spiritual spheres that shaped not only the early medieval period but in fact the entire Middle Ages. This enduring spirit of continuity, which consistently fostered renewal, is vividly reflected in the legacy of the Late Antique sphere. Its influence had maintained also in larger parts of continental Europe, and as a key cultural determinant also marked and shaped the new cultural identities of so-called “barbarian” tribes and emerging nations. This influence persisted not only in the period following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, but also during the Early Middle Ages and the time when the idea of modern nation-states in Western and Central Europe was conceived. This is especially well illustrated by two examples: Charlemagne and his concept of reviving the characteristics and grandeur of Antiquity within his rule and state, and the Avar period and its cultural sphere.

The intensity of influence itself, related to the occurrence of direct and indirect contacts (external influence) and the strength of the identity of the Romanized population encountered by the Avars in parts of the Carpathian Basin, as well as the power of the sources of cultural influence, changed during the Avar period:

- During the early Avar period, the Avars settled in a region where the Late Antique cultural tradition was strongly present, particularly in areas such as Keszthely and Pécs (*Sopiana*), as well as in parts of central and eastern Pannonia (though to a lesser extent), but also elements of Germanic and, soon after, Slavic provenience.¹ Around the mid-7th century, a process of homogenization of the Avar-age cultural expression began, which later became the main determinant

¹ Kardaras 2018, str. 103–104.

¹ Kardaras 2018, pp. 103–4

ri često upadaju u balkanske provincije Bizanta, odakle odvođu zarobljenike koje naseljavaju u svoje naseobinsko područje, dok od Bizanta redovito primaju tribut, koji se ne isplaćuje samo u zlatnom novcu, već i u skupocjenim predmetima.²

- Nakon neuspješne opsade Konstantinopola odnosi s Bizantom nisu potpuno prekinuti. Naime, pisani izvori potvrđuju diplomatske odnose još 678. godine, premda se intenzitet tih odnosa zasigurno smanjuje. U 8. stoljeću nemamo pisanih izvora o izravnoj komunikaciji s Bizantom iako arheološki nalazi govore u prilog održavanju određenih diplomatskih odnosa³ i unatoč činjenici da Avarski Kaganat više ne dijeli granicu s Bizantom i da je, uslijed arapske opasnosti, Bizant smanjio opseg svoje ekumene, prije svega odustajući od kontrole balkanskog prostora.⁴

Avarski kulturni krug pri tome je iznimno bogat izvor ilustrativnih primjera kasnoantičkog utjecaja na više razina. Treba prije svega napomenuti kako se kasnoantička sfera u avarskoj kulturi manifestira kroz utjecaj ranobizantske kulture, kojoj kasna antika predstavlja značajan dio identiteta i na kojoj je ta kultura aktivno izgrađena. U avarskom kulturnom krugu, odnosno bolje rečeno materijalnoj kulturi, jer je to onaj opipljivi dio kojim se znanstvenici jedino i mogu baviti, taj se utjecaj može definirati na nekoliko razina, a provlači se kroz čitav avarski izričaj i ostavštinu, kako povijesnu tako i arheološku. On je stoga naslućen još pri početku proučavanja avarske materijalne kulture („skitski/hunski“⁵), ustanovljen je kroz „bizantski materijal“ te je odigrao značajnu kronološku ulogu već pri prvim točnim kronološkim klasifikacijama materijala.⁶ U 21. stoljeću taj je utjecaj potvrđen kao izravan, čak i onda kada ga povijesni izvori ne spominju,⁷ a ta razina utjecaja vidljiva je kroz cijelo razdoblje postojanja Kaganata. U prvim stoljećima očitovao se puno jasnije, kroz relativno velik broj importiranih predmeta i gotovo izravne imitacije bizantskih luksuznih proizvoda kao manifestacije povlaštenog položaja u društvu, ali je prisutan i u kasnoavarskom razdoblju 8. stoljeća, iako je broj takvih primjera manji.

of the Late Avar period, while elements of other identities started to fade away or became completely invisible.

- Up until 626 AD (the failed siege of Constantinople), the Avars and Byzantium had maintained constant diplomatic relations with respective delegations abroad (including the exchange of diplomatic gifts). At the same time, the Avars frequently raided the Byzantine Balkan provinces, capturing hostages and resettling them within Avar territories. They also received regular tribute from Byzantium, paid not only in gold coins but also in luxurious objects.²
- After the failed siege of Constantinople, relations with Byzantium did not cease completely. Written sources confirm diplomatic relations as late as 678 AD, although their intensity certainly decreased. While there are no written records about direct communication with Byzantium in the 8th century, archaeological evidence points to certain ongoing diplomatic exchanges during that time.³ This occurred despite the fact that the Avar Khaganate no longer shared a border with Byzantium and that Byzantium, due to the Arab threat, reduced the scope of its oecumene, primarily by giving up control over the Balkan region.⁴

The Avar cultural circle represents an exceptionally rich source of illustrative examples of Late Antique influence on multiple levels. However, it should be noted that the Late Antique sphere in Avar culture is manifested through the influence of early Byzantine culture, which is deeply rooted in Late Antiquity and actively built upon it. In the Avar cultural circle—or more precisely, its material culture, as this is the tangible aspect that scientists can study—this influence can be defined on several levels. It permeates the entire Avar expression and legacy, both the historical and archaeological, which has become apparent already during the earliest studies of Avar material culture (“Scythian/Hunnic”⁵). It was identified through “Byzantine material” and played a significant chronological role in the first precise chronological classifications of the discovered material.⁶ In the 21st century,

² Pohl 2018, str. 89–93, 100–109, 220–230, 250.

³ Daim 2010.

⁴ Pohl 2018, str. 305.

⁵ Hampel 1905.

⁶ Kovrig 1963.

⁷ Ježić iz Hohenberga; Daim 2000; Daim 2010.

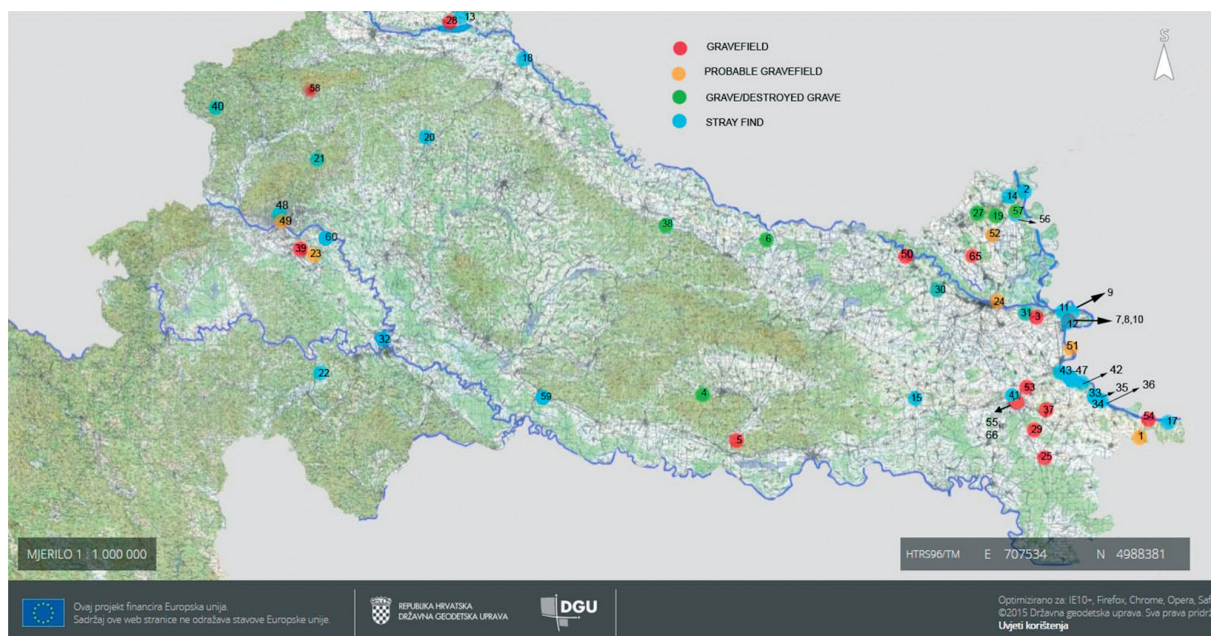
² Pohl 2018, pp. 89-93, 100-109, 220-230, 250

³ Daim 2010.

⁴ Pohl 2018:305

⁵ Hampel 1905

⁶ Kovrig 1963



Sl. 1. Karta prostiranja avarodobnih nalazišta (groblja, grobovi, slučajni nalazi) u kontinentalnoj Hrvatskoj (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022a, fig. 3, 68)

Fig. 1 Map of the distribution of Avar-age sites (cemeteries, graves, chance finds) in continental Croatia (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022a: Fig. 3, 68)

S obzirom na trenutno stanje istraživanja, koje upućuje na najveću koncentraciju avarodobnih nalaza i lokaliteta koji se nedvojbeno mogu povezati s avarskim kulturnim krugom u najistočnijem dijelu Hrvatske, gdje se čini kako intenzivnije naseljavanje ili barem postojanje avarodobnih zajednica datira u kasnoavarsko doba ili eventualno na sam kraj srednjavarskog doba, u pogledu utjecaja domaće istraživače zanima upravo pitanje kasnoantičkog/bizantskog utjecaja u 8. stoljeću.⁸

U kasnoavarskom razdoblju mediteranski/kasnoantički utjecaj širi se ili odvija ne samo preko (relativno) malobrojnih bizantskih proizvoda, kao što je već spomenuti jezičac iz Hohenberga, već prije svega uvođenjem kasnoantičkih dekorativnih motiva i tema koje simboliziraju moć i pripadnost povlaštenom sloju unutar avarskog društva, pa čak i onda kada ti motivi, izgleda, nisu u originalnom značenju bili razumljivi samim nositeljima.⁹ Ján Dekan 1972. godine započinje ozbiljnu raspravu o toj temi pažljivom analizom niza kasnoantičkih motiva na kasnoavarskim jezičcima prepoznajući i utjecaje drugih kultura upisane u mediteranski kulturni i ikonografski kod (prostor Perzije/Irana). Zapravo, nakon njega tek Gergely Szenthe, gotovo

this influence has been confirmed as a direct one, even in cases where historical sources offered little or no evidence.⁷ This level of influence is evident throughout the existence of the Avar Khaganate, more clearly in its early centuries, through a relatively large number of imports and almost direct imitations of luxurious Byzantine items as symbolic embodiments of a privileged position in society, but it is also present during the Late Avar period of the 8th century, though there are fewer examples.

The state of research points to the greatest concentration of Avar-age finds and sites that can without doubt be linked to the Avar cultural circle in the easternmost part of Croatia, where it seems that the most intensive time of settlement or at least the presence of Avar communities dates to the Late Avar or possibly the very end of the Middle Avar period. In terms of influence, domestic researchers are particularly interested in the question of Late Antique/Byzantine influence in the 8th century.⁸

During the Late Avar period, Mediterranean/Late Antique influence spread not only through the (relatively) few Byzantine products, such as the earlier mentioned belt strap-end from Hohenberg, but primarily through the adoption of Late Antique

⁸ Šmalcelj Novaković 2022a.

⁹ Dekan 1972.

⁷ Strap-end from Hohenberg; Daim 2000, 2010

⁸ Šmalcelj Novaković 2022a

50 godina kasnije, produbljuje ovu temu aktualizirajući pitanje socijalnog uređenja avarskog društva daljnjim promišljanjima o distribuciji i ikonografiji najvažnijeg simbola avarske kulture, pojasne garniture, koja je neraskidivo povezana s pitanjem kasnoantičkog, bizantskog utjecaja. Pojasna garnitura u kasnoavarsko doba postaje u potpunosti uniformirani vizualni faktor kohezije unutar avarske sfere moći; kulturalna ekspresija koja nastaje na temelju bizantsko-mediteranskih motiva, koji nisu tek puko kopirani, već se prilagođavaju i odabiru u skladu s avarodobnim potrebama i zajednicom. U 8. stoljeću razvoj i promjena stila garnitura mogu se pratiti iz generacije u generaciju, a u svakoj od njih stil garnitura gradi se, u većoj ili manjoj mjeri, preuzimanjem određenih kasnoantičkih/bizantskih/mediteranskih dekorativnih i/ili formalnih elemenata. Pri tome, prostiranje garnitura reflektira i distribucijsku mrežu prestižnih dobara unutar avarske sfere, pri čemu je determinanta distribucije određenog tipa moć, status i/ili imetak nositelja. Szenthe je jasno pokazao kako se kasnoavarske garniture koje pripadaju istoj generaciji razlikuju ne samo po materijalu već i po obliku i motivima, do te mjere da je jasno kako postoje više ili manje prestižni primjerci, među kojima bizantinske forme imaju posebno značenje/status. U horizontalnoj hijerarhiji one označavaju pripadnost europskoj eliti koja emulira bizantski/mediteranski utjecaj, a u vertikalnoj hijerarhiji jasno signaliziraju viši, povlašteni status unutar vlastite zajednice.¹⁰ Szenthe je uspio prepoznati mediteranski utjecaj i izvan importa luksuznih predmeta ponudivši niz primjera izravnih utjecaja mediteranske forme u različitim konstrukcijskim, formalnim, dizajnerskim rješenjima i motivima kroz čitavo kasnoavarsko doba, u većoj ili manjoj mjeri.¹¹ Međutim, vrlo je teško pobliže determinirati kako je do tog utjecaja došlo, primarno zbog ograničenog znanja o produkcijskim i distribucijskim procesima kulture iz koje taj utjecaj dolazi, a koji uključuju pitanja vezana za bizantske majstore na granicama bizantske sfere, bizantske majstore „u inozemstvu“, bizantske majstore kao učitelje, pa čak i pitanje mogućeg prežitka kasnoantičkog majstorstva u nekadšnjim žarištima romaniziranog stanovništva na području Kaganata, kao što su Keszthely i Sopianae (Pečuh). No, danas je prilično jasno kako kasnoavarske pojasne garniture predstavljaju nekoliko ra-

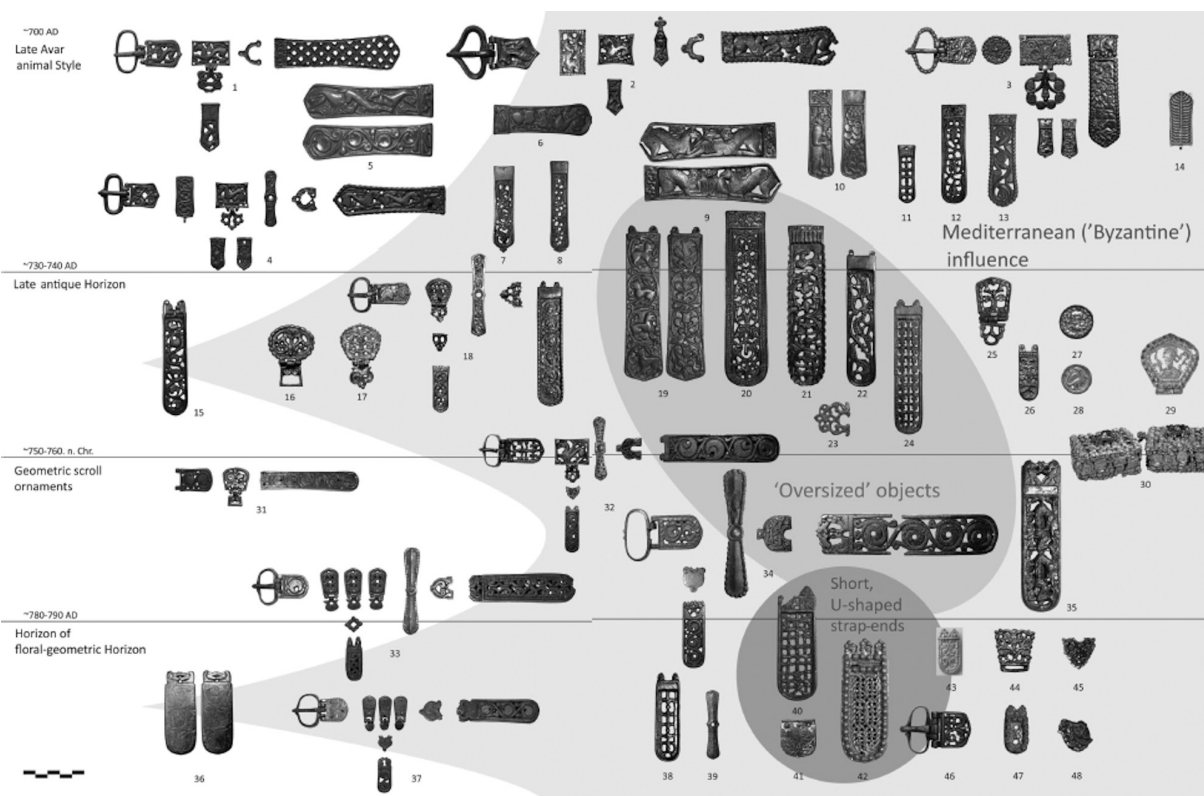
decorative motifs and themes related to symbols of power and affiliation with the privileged class within Avar society. This occurred even when it seems that these motifs were not fully understood in their original meaning by their bearers themselves.⁹ In 1972, Ján Dekan initiated a serious discussion on this topic through a careful analysis of a series of Late Antique motifs on Late Avar belt strap-ends, while at the same time he also identified influences from other cultures embedded in the Mediterranean cultural and iconographic code (the area of Persia/Iran). In fact, it was only nearly 50 years later that Gergely Szenthe delved deeper into the topic, reviving the discussion on the social organization of Avar society through further reflections on the distribution and iconography of the most important symbol of Avar culture—the belt set, which is inextricably linked to the question of Late Antique and Byzantine influence. In the Late Avar period, the belt set became a fully uniform visual factor of cohesion within the Avar sphere of power—a cultural expression rooted in Byzantine-Mediterranean motifs. However, these motifs were adapted and selected in accordance with the Avar-age needs and the community, rather than being mere imitations. In the 8th century, the development and stylistic changes of these belt sets can be traced from generation to generation. In each generation, to varying degrees, the style of the sets was shaped by incorporating specific Late Antique, Byzantine and Mediterranean decorative and/or formal elements. Furthermore, the distribution of belt sets reflects also the network where these prestigious goods were circulated within the Avar sphere, while the determinant for the distribution of a particular type was power, status, and/or wealth of the bearer. Szenthe clearly demonstrated that Late Avar belt sets belonging to the same generation differ not only in material but also in form and motifs to such an extent that it becomes evident that there had been more and less prestigious specimen. Byzantine forms, in particular, held special significance or status. In the horizontal hierarchy, these forms signified a belonging to the European elite that emulated Byzantine/Mediterranean influences, whereas in the vertical hierarchy, they clearly displayed the higher, privileged status of the bearer towards members of his own community.¹⁰ Szenthe successfully identified the

¹⁰ Szenthe 2018.

¹¹ Szenthe 2013b.

⁹ Dekan 1972

¹⁰ Szenthe 2018



Sl. 2. Szentheova kronološko-stilistička shema kasnoavarskih garnitura s obzirom na mediteranski utjecaj (Szenthe 2019, fig. 7, 230–231)

Fig. 2 Szenthe's chronological-stylistic scheme of Late Avar belt sets in regard to the Mediterranean influence (Szenthe 2019: Fig. 7, 230–231)

zličitih izričaja unutar iste generacije, koji se možda mogu povezati s različitim statusima ili razinama pristupa distribucijskoj mreži prestižnih proizvoda, osim luksuznih importa, pozlaćenih garnitura kao oznaka elite i standardnih garnitura koje se u više-manje sličnim kombinacijama mogu pronaći širom Kaganata.¹² Već u kasnoavarskom razdoblju susreće se određeno shvaćanje kasnoantičke, to jest rano-bizantske sfere kao one čiji se elementi emuliraju, ali uz preoblikovanje odnosno prilagođavanje vlastitoj zajednici i društvenim uvjetima.¹³ Ovaj proces transformacije elemenata bio je izraženiji nego u ranijem razdoblju, kada je i kontakt s izvorima bio intenzivniji (makar u smislu diplomatskih prijetnji i pljačkaških pohoda).

Kako bizantski utjecaj u to doba predstavlja vrstu paneuropskog utjecaja, postavlja se pitanje kako prepoznati takav utjecaj na manje luksuznim proizvodima, gdje tehnika produkcije ne može dati uvid u porijeklo predmeta. Nadalje, pitanje je i na koji način ustanoviti je li moguće da važan faktor

Mediterranean influence beyond the scope of imported luxurious items by providing numerous examples of direct influence of Mediterranean shapes in various structural, formal, design and decorative solutions and motifs throughout the entire Late Avar period, though to varying degrees.¹¹ However, determining the precise genesis of this influence is challenging, largely due to our limited understanding of the production and distribution processes of the culture from which it originated, and leading to questions, such as the role of Byzantine craftsmen working along the frontier of the Byzantine sphere, those active “abroad,” their contributions as teachers, and even the question of the potential survival of Late Antique craftsmanship in former centres with a Romanized population within the territory of the Khaganate, like for example Keszthely and Sopianae (modern Pécs). Despite these uncertainties, it is now evident that Late Avar belt sets reflect several distinct stylistic expressions within a single generation. These variations might be related to differences in status or the level of access to the

¹² Szenthe 2013a.

¹³ Pohl 2018, str. 346–347.

¹¹ Szenthe 2013b

predstavlja neizravan utjecaj. Ako prihvatimo činjenicu da pripadnici avarskog kulturnog kruga višeg i visokog socijalnog statusa nose takve predmete, a istodobno primjećujemo da „obični puk“ emulira mediteranski utjecaj izborom, na primjer, zvjezdolikih naušnica, koje od luksuznog proizvoda postaju produkcijski prilagođen nakitni oblik raširen među običnim pukom (lijevani jednostavni brončani primjerci), možemo pretpostaviti da se taj utjecaj širi i neizravnim putem, tako što članovi zajednice pokušavaju oponašati reprezentaciju onih privilegiranog statusa.

Međutim, postoji još jedan aspekt, a to je utjecaj iznutra. Unutar avarske države postoji dio populacije koji se identificira kao kasnoantičko/rano-bizantsko stanovništvo, odnosno članovi zajednice koji se poistovjećuju s tom tradicijom. Također, prisutni su i rimski spomenici koji nedvojbeno utječu i u određenoj mjeri oblikuju avarodobnu materijalnu kulturu Karpatske kotline, pri čemu razina, a posljedično i vrsta tog utjecaja nisu iste na svim prostorima Kaganata. One ovise o tome je li regija bila u većoj ili manjoj mjeri pod kontrolom ili u žiži interesa Bizantskog Carstva (zapadni Balkan), je li riječ o prostoru koji je imao snažnu kasnorimsku zajednicu koja je zadržala svoj kasnoantički identitet (primjer okolice Balatona i Keszthelya), radi li se o pretpostavljenim davno opustošenim dijelovima nekadašnjeg Rimskog Carstva (*Cibalae*) ili pak o regijama koje službeno nikad nisu činile njegov dio (Moravska).

Jedan od rijetkih i iznimno zanimljivih primjera, koji ukazuje na potrebu razmatranja i mogućeg „utjecaja iznutra“, predstavlja okov pojase kuke životinjske forme, pronađen na mladom muškarcu s garniturom iz dvojnog groba 53 na lokalitetu Privlaka – Gole njive. Takozvana životinjska kuka, tj. okov s kukicom u obliku ptičje protome, jednodijelni je lijevani pravokutni okov lagano zaobljenih bočnih strana, iz čijeg jednog kraja izvire dotična kuka, koja se sastoji od tordiranog vrata i ptičje protome. Okovna pločica podijeljena je u tri osnovna ukrasna polja: motiv osmice ponavlja se dvaput, a glatko prazno polje s ureznom vertikalnom linijom dijeli taj motiv od motiva dviju paralelnih dvotračnih pletenica-vitica odvojenih profiliranom linijom. S donje strane okova nalaze se dvije ušice za pričvršćivanje na pojas. Kuke i propeleri sa životinjskim glavama dio su najstarijeg horizonta lijevanih garnitura i pojavljuju se za-

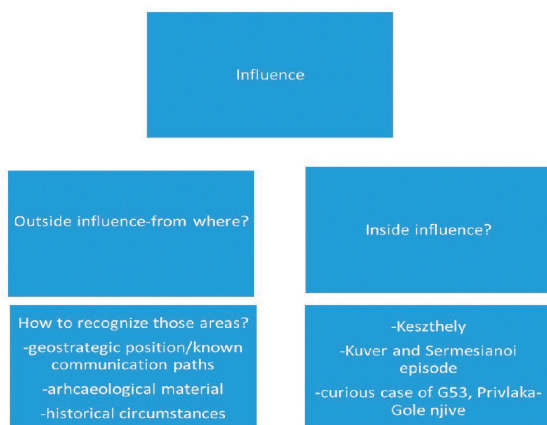
distribution network of prestigious goods, except in the case of luxurious imports, including gilded belt sets which symbolize an elite status, and standard sets that appeared more or less in similar combinations across the entire Khaganate.¹² In the Late Avar period, we encounter a certain understanding of the Late Antique or early Byzantine sphere, wherein its elements were not merely imitated, but reshaped and adapted to align with their own community and social conditions.¹³ These elements underwent a greater degree of transformation compared to earlier periods, when direct contact with the source had been more intense (even if only in the context of diplomatic threats or raids).

Since the Byzantine influence represented a form of pan-European influence during that era, a key challenge is identifying such influence on less luxurious items, where production techniques cannot provide insight into the origin of the object. Furthermore, how can we determine whether indirect influence played an important role? If we accept the fact that members of the Avar cultural circle of higher and elite social status used such items, while simultaneously observing that the “common folk” emulated Mediterranean influences—such as the adoption of star-shaped earrings, which transitioned from luxury items to jewellery forms that were widespread among ordinary people and were, in terms of their production, adapted to this fact (simple cast bronze earrings)—it is reasonable to assume that this influence also spread indirectly. In this regard, it can be assumed that community members likely sought to emulate the status symbols of privileged classes.

However, there is also another aspect that must be considered: the internal influence. Within the Avar state, there was a segment of the population who identified as Late Antique/early Byzantine (i.e., those members of the community who associated themselves with that tradition). Additionally, there were memories of the Roman traditions still present that undoubtedly influenced and, to some extent, shaped the Avar-period material culture in the Carpathian Basin, though the extent and consequently the nature of this influence were not the same in all regions of the Khaganate. Variations depended on whether the region was under stronger or weaker control of, or in the focus of interest of the Byzan-

¹² Szenthe 2013a

¹³ Pohl 2018, pp. 346-7



Sl. 3. Shema utvrđivanja kulturnog utjecaja
Fig. 3 Scheme of establishing cultural influence

jedno s jezičcima s tuljcem, okovima s grifonima, potkovastim štitnicima rupica i limenim kopčama. Iako ovakav oblik kuke Garam uopće ne spominje, možemo zaključiti da je ona kronološki relativno paralelna s okovima s grifonima.¹⁴ Životinjska kuka predstavlja najzanimljiviji nalaz u grobu te je svojevrsni kuriozitet jer oblikom i ukrasom odskače od standardnog kasnoavarskog repertoara i nismo joj uspjeli pronaći izravne analogije. Ipak, zanimljivo je da se okov vrlo slične forme, s duguljastim vrhom koji je lagano savijen u oblik kuke, pojavljuje u grobu 32 na lokalitetu Kecel – Határdülő,¹⁵ a ta je garnitura nedavno određena kao primjer gotovo izravnog utjecaja bizantsko-mediteranskog kulturnog kruga na kasnoavarsku produkciju s početka 8. stoljeća.¹⁶ Anita Rapan Papeša zaključila je kako se radi o predmetu na kojem su očiti utjecaji perioda seobe naroda, točnije utjecaji estetike germanskog kulturnog kruga 7. stoljeća na području Kaganata, ali unutar antičke tradicije. Dvotračna pletenica nije nepoznata u avarskom kulturnom krugu, ali oblikovanje kuke u obliku ptičje protome podsjeća na objekte iz germanskog kulturnog kruga u razdoblju seobe naroda, dok ušice na stražnjoj strani kuke prizivaju bizantsku produkcijsku tradiciju.¹⁷ Dakle, predmet koji ne možemo označiti kao starinu niti smatrati proizvodom sekundarne upotrebe sadrži konstruktivne elemente bizantsko-mediteranske produkcije, a dekorativni izričaj čvrsto mu je vezan za germansku produkciju. Pronađen je u blizini Vinkovaca, nekadašnjih *Cibale*, gdje je primije-

tine Empire (e.g., the Western Balkans); whether it was an area with a strong late Roman community that retained its Late Antique identity (e.g., the surroundings of Lake Balaton and Keszthely); whether these were areas of the former Roman Empire that were presumably devastated a long time (*Cibale*), or regions that were never formally part of the Empire (Moravia).

One of the rare and exceptionally intriguing specimen and the reason why a potential “internal influence” should be considered is the animal-shaped fitting of a belt hook, found with a belt set on a young man in double grave 53 at site Privlaka-Gole Njive. The so-called animal hook—a fitting with a hook shaped like a bird protome—is a one-piece cast rectangular fitting with slightly rounded sides, from which said hook sticks out at one end. The hook features a twisted neck and a bird protome. The plate of the fitting is divided into three basic ornamental fields: the figure-eight motif is repeated twice, and separated from the motif of two parallel double-strand braids/tendrils delineated by a profiled line by a smooth blank field with an incised vertical line. On the back of the fitting, there are two eyelets for attachment to the belt. Hooks and propellers with animal heads belong to the earliest horizon of cast belt sets and appear with strap-ends with tubes, fittings with griffins, horseshoe-shaped protections of the holes, and buckles of sheet metal. Although Garam does not mention this specific type of hook, we can conclude that, in relative chronology, this hook is contemporaneous with the fittings with griffins.¹⁴ The animal-shaped hook is the most intriguing find in the grave—a notable curiosity due to its unique shape and decoration, which deviate from the typical Late Avar repertoire. So far, I have found no direct analogies for it. Interestingly, however, a very similar fitting with an elongated tip, slightly bending into a hook, has been identified in grave G32 at Kecel-Határdülő.¹⁵ The belt set found there has recently been classified as a clear example of direct Byzantine-Mediterranean influence on Late Avar craftsmanship at the very beginning of the 8th century.¹⁶ Anita Rapan Papeša concluded that the item shows evident influences from the Migration Period, specifically the aesthetics of the Germanic cultural circle of the 7th century within the

¹⁴ Garam 1995, str. 244.

¹⁵ Sós 1958, T. 20.

¹⁶ Szenthe 2013c, str. 143.

¹⁷ Rapan Papeša 2020, str. 24.

¹⁴ Garam 1995, 244

¹⁵ Sós 1958, T20

¹⁶ Szenthe 2013c: 143



Sl. 4. Željezna tauširana falera iz groba 215, Privlaka – Gole njive (K. Rončević)

Fig. 4 Iron damascened phalera from G215, Privlaka-Gole Njive (K. Rončević)

čena veća koncentracija gepidskih nalaza iz predavarskog doba, te je to područje zasigurno bilo pod njihovom jurisdikcijom prije 568. godine.¹⁸

U Privlaci, koja predstavlja jednu siromašnu ruralnu zajednicu, lokalni vođe ukopani su u centralnoj liniji groblja, a njihove garniture gotovo se uopće ne razlikuju od skoro standardiziranih, „mainstream“ kompleta, motiva i scena koji su prisutni na većini kasnoavarskih groblja tijekom 8. stoljeća. Međutim, na samom rubu groblja pronađena je skupina grobova u kojoj se pojavljuje manji broj vrlo zanimljivih nalaza koji upućuju na prisutnost jakog kasnoantičkog/mediteranskog/bizantskog utjecaja.¹⁹

Tako je na tom lokalitetu, u jedinom grobu konjanika, grobu 215, osim velikog jezičca pojasne garniture s prikazima antropomorfno gahača na grifonu, koji je već Dekan odredio kao prizor koji dolazi iz mediteranske sfere,²⁰ među ostalim, pronađen i par velikih te nekoliko manjih pozlaćenih željeznih tauširanih falera. Par velikih falera nosi standardni kasnoantički motiv pletenice s okancima, uz poznati vrapski ljiljan, odnosno „fleur de lis“, a još je važniji podatak kako je radiografska

teritorij of the Khaganate, but still within the scope of antique traditions. The two-strand braid is not unknown in the Avar cultural circle, but the design of the hook shaped as a bird protome is evocative of objects from the Germanic cultural circle during the Migration Period, while the eyelets on the back of the hook are reminiscent of Byzantine craft traditions.¹⁷ Therefore, this item, which cannot be classified as antique or being in secondary use, combines constructive elements of Byzantine-Mediterranean craftsmanship with a decorative expression firmly tied to Germanic production. It was found near Vinkovci (ancient Ciabala), where a higher concentration of Gepid finds from the pre-Avar period has been noticed, an area that was undoubtedly under their jurisdiction before 568 AD.¹⁸

It is notable that in Privlaka, a relatively poor rural community where local leaders were buried along the central axis of the cemetery and their belt sets hardly differed from the standardized, “mainstream” sets, motifs and scenes typically seen in almost all Late Avar cemeteries of the 8th century, a small number of very interesting finds discovered in a group of graves located at the very edge of the cemetery point to the presence of a strong Late Antique/Mediterranean/Byzantine influence.¹⁹

In this regard, grave 215, the only equestrian grave at the site, yielded not only the find of a large strap-end from a belt set, with depictions of an anthropomorphic rider on a griffin, a motif identified by Dekan as originating from the Mediterranean cultural sphere,²⁰ but also contained a pair of large and several smaller gilded iron damascened phalerae. Not only does the pair of large phalerae feature the standard Late Antique motif of an interlace with small loops, accompanied by the well-known “fleur-de-lis,” but even more significant is the finding that radiographic analysis revealed the phalerae were damascened using the Late Antique technique of *Schmelztauschierung*. This method was used during the Avar period for rare, mostly luxurious items, such as wooden folding stools and several pairs of damascened iron phalerae, which are considered among the rarest types of Late Avar finds.²¹

¹⁸ Rapan Papeša, Roksandić 2019.

¹⁹ Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b.

²⁰ Dekan 1972.

¹⁷ Rapan Papeša 2020, 24

¹⁸ Rapan Papeša, Roksandić 2019

¹⁹ Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b

²⁰ Dekan 1972

²¹ Heinrich Tamaska 2005, Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b



Sl. 5. Garnitura iz groba 216, Privlaka – Gole njive (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022c, fig. 3, 275)

Fig. 5 Belt set from G216, Privlaka-Gole Njive (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022c, Fig. 3, 275)

analiza otkrila da su falere tauširane kasnoantičkom tehnikom *Schmelztauschierung*, kojom su u avarsko doba ukrašavani rijetki, uglavnom luksuzni predmeti, poput drvenih rasklopnih stolaca i nekoliko parova tauširanih željeznih falera, koji se smatraju jednim od najrjeđih tipova kasnoavarskih nalaza.²¹

Na to se nadovezuje prisutnost iznimno zanimljive garniture iz groba 216,²² čiji su dekorativni okovi i jezičci ukrašeni tzv. cirkuskom scenom borbe zvijeri i čovjeka u iznimno kvalitetnoj izvedbi. Svi okovi garniture s prikazom navedene scene identični su garnituri pozlaćenog jezičca iz slavnog groba 30 na groblju Hortobagy Arkus, koje je nedavno određeno kao jedno od najkasnijih groblja avarske elite.²³ Grob 216 sadržava veći broj štitolikih okova s prikazom zvijeri.²⁴ Jezičac s lokaliteta Hortobagy Arkus poslužio je Szentheu kao jedan od primjera

The picture there is complemented by the presence of an exceptionally intriguing belt set from grave 216,²² whose decorative fittings and strap-ends are adorned with the so-called “circus scene” depicting a combat between a beast and a man, rendered with remarkable craftsmanship. Notably, all fittings of the belt set bearing this motif are identical to the gilded strap-end from the renowned grave 30 of the Hortobagy-Arkus cemetery. Additionally, grave 216 contained a greater number of shield-like fittings depicting a beast.²³ It has recently been identified as one of the latest burial grounds of the Avar elite.²⁴ The strap-end from Hortobagy-Arkus served Szenthe as an example to show the direct influence of Mediterranean production, but not in the sense of an imported luxurious product (Fig. 2).

Additionally, the hypothesis of a certain Late Antique influence is further strengthened by the fact

²¹ Heinrich Tamaska 2005; Šmalcelj Novaković 2022b.

²² O garnituri iz groba 216 u Privlaci relativno nedavno sam objavila rad s detaljnom kronološko-tipološkom analizom, pri čemu sam predložila stilsku podjelu okova s istim prikazom pronađenih diljem Kaganata i ukratko objasnila važnost tog nalaza za naše podneblje (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022c).

²³ Szenthe, Gáll 2022.

²⁴ Szenthe, Gáll 2022, T. 22–24.

²² I have recently published a paper on the belt set from G216 in Privlaka in which I provided a detailed chronological-typological analysis and proposed a stylistic division of the fittings featuring the same scene, which have been discovered across the Khaganate. Furthermore, I explained the importance of such find in our regions (Šmalcelj Novaković 2022c).

²³ Szenthe, Gáll 2022, T22-24

²⁴ Szenthe, Gáll 2022

izravnog utjecaja mediteranske produkcije, ali ne u smislu importa luksuznog proizvoda (sl. 2).

Uz to, dodatnu težinu pretpostavci o određenom kasnoantičkom utjecaju pridodaje činjenica kako grobovi s garniturama ove grupe imaju jasne ženske pandane, što je inače teško razlučivo na kasnoavarodobnim grobljima. Pokojnice u tim grobovima imaju srebrne (i jedan brončani par) grozdolike naušnice s izduženim privjeskom,²⁵ koje porijeklo vuku iz mediteranskog kulturnog kruga. One nisu standardni dio kasnoavarodobne nakitne produkcije,²⁶ a poznatije su po tome što su bile omiljene u postavarskim slavenskim zajednicama.²⁷

Relativno nekonvencionalan izbor nakita ne zadržava se samo na jednom nakitnom obliku na jednom lokalitetu mikroregije, već se u pogledu prisutnosti zvjezdolikih naušnica nameće kao svojevrsni fenomen koji zaslužuje veću pažnju arheologa. Naime, na određenim lokalitetima pronalaze se zvjezdolike naušnice, u luksuznim i brončanim jednostavnim lijevanim verzijama, koje su očito često nastajale prema luksuznim varijantama kao primarnim uzorima (Šarengard – Klopore, Vinkovci – bb, Privlaka, Otok), dok se na vremenski paralelnim i prostorno bliskim grobljima one uopće ne pojavljuju (Nuštar, Stari Jankovci).²⁸ Zvjezdolike naušnice predstavljaju dokazano mediteransku formu (koja se na Mediteranu razvija nešto drukčije tijekom 8. stoljeća), čiji se „put“ od izvorišta do Kaganata može slijediti od Crnomorja preko Balkana do krajnjeg odredišta,²⁹ gdje postaju jedan od očekivanih, ali ne i prevladavajućih tipova naušnica kasnoavarodobne produkcije, koji se tradicionalno veže za slavensku prisutnost. Na prostoru mikroregije zapadnog Srijema pojavljuju se u čak 11 od 328 sveukupno istraženih kasnoavarodobnih grobova (uz još niz slučajnih nalaza), dok je, recimo, na Tiszafüredu samo 24 od 1282 istražena groba imalo i nalaz zvjezdolikih naušnica.³⁰ Njihovo pojavljivanje indicira kako u određenim zajednicama zapadnog Srijema dobrostojeće članice izričito biraju zvjezdolike naušnice iako su u mikroregiji prisutne i dostupne i druge forme. Njihova velika formalna sličnost i dijapazon dekorativnih motiva upućuju na



Sl. 6. Par srebrnih i brončanih (oštećenih) grozdolikih naušnica iz groba 225, Privlaka – Gole njive (P. Šmalcelj Novaković)

Fig. 6 Pair of silver and bronze (damaged) raceme-type earrings from G225, Privlaka-Gole Njive (P. Šmalcelj Novaković)

that graves containing sets from this group have clear female counterparts, which is otherwise difficult to discern in cemeteries of the Late Avar period. The women in these graves are adorned with silver (and one bronze pair) raceme-type earrings with elongated pendants,²⁵ which originate from the Mediterranean cultural circle and are not considered to be standard components of Late Avar jewelry production²⁶ (Čilinska, 1975). These are better known as popular items among post-Avar Slavic communities.²⁷

The relatively unconventional selection of jewellery is not limited to a single form at one site within this micro-region, but in terms of the presence of star-shaped earrings, it emerges as a phenomenon deserving greater attention from archaeologists. Namely, at certain sites, star-shaped earrings appear—both luxurious and simple cast bronze versions—that often seem to have been created with the luxurious variants as their primary templates and models (Šarengard-Klopore, Vinkovci-bb, Privlaka, Otok). However, at contemporaneous and nearby cemeteries, such as Nuštar and Stari Jankovci, these earrings are entirely absent.²⁸ Star-shaped earrings represent a proven Mediterranean form

²⁵ Za više detalja o ovoj pojavi upućujem na Šmalcelj Novaković 2020.

²⁶ Čilinská 1975, str. 65, sl. 1.

²⁷ Moravska i Starohrvatska Kneževina; Petrinc 2009, str. 120–124.

²⁸ Šmalcelj Novaković, Rapan Papeša, 2024.

²⁹ Petrinc 2009, str. 122–123, 128–129.

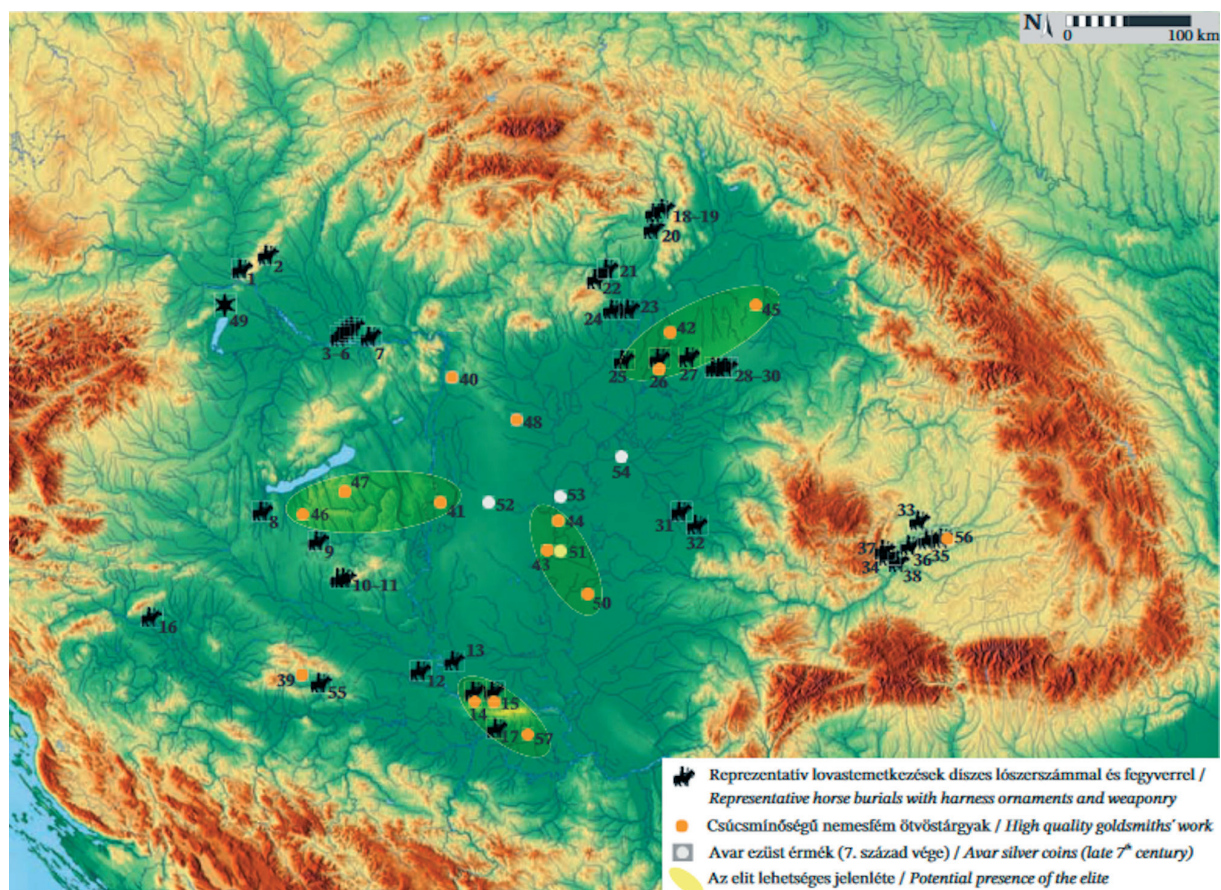
³⁰ Garam 1995, str. 158.

²⁵ For more details on this occurrence, see Šmalcelj Novaković 2020

²⁶ Čilinská 1975, Fig. 1, p. 65

²⁷ Moravia, early Croatian principality, Petrinc 2009, 120–124

²⁸ Šmalcelj Novaković, Rapan Papeša 2024.



Sl. 7. Karta kasnoavarskog Kaganata s označenim potencijalnim područjima na kojima obitava elita (Szenthe, Gáll 2022, fig. 128, 329)

Fig. 7 Map of the Late Avar Khaganate with marked potential areas where the elite resided (taken from: Szenthe, Gáll 2022, Fig. 128, 329)

moгуćnost njihove produkcije unutar same mikro-regije ili u njezinoj blizini.³¹

Ovi bi nalazi mogli ostati na razini kurioziteta ili biti jednostavno objašnjeni kao određeno odstupanje periferije od ostatka Kaganata. Međutim, kada ih sagledamo uz određene opće indicije i povijesne prilike, otvaraju nam prostor za dublje promišljanje problematike njihove pojave. Prije svega, treba naglasiti da je prostor zapadnog Srijema područje slavnog dunavskog limesa i njegova zaleđa te je još u doba Rimskog Carstva bio dio kopnenog koridora istok-zapad. Nadalje, čini se kako su Avari bili svjesni rimske komunikacijske infrastrukture, jer primjećujemo uzorak njihova naseljavanja u blizini nekadašnjih rimskih prometnica.³² Uz to, treba

(that developed slightly differently in the Mediterranean during the 8th century), whose “path” from the original source to the Khaganate can be traced from the Black Sea region through the Balkans to their final destination,²⁹ where it became one of the expected, but not predominant types of earrings of Late Avar production, which is traditionally linked to Slavic presence. In the area of the micro-region of Western Syrmia, star-shaped earrings appear in as many as 11 of the 328 investigated graves from the Late Avar period (along with numerous chance finds), while, for example, at Tiszafüred, only 24 out of 1,282 investigated graves contained star-shaped earrings.³⁰ Their presence suggests that in certain communities of Western Syrmia, affluent women explicitly chose star-shaped earrings, even though other forms were present and available in the micro-region. The significant formal similarity

³¹ Šmalcelj Novaković, Rapan Papeša, 2024.

³² Na primjer, avarodobno stanovništvo u Transdanubiji naseljavalo se u blizini ostataka kasnorimskih struktura te se čak 60 % ranoavariodobnih lokaliteta u regiji nalazi na udaljenosti do 2 km od kasnorimskih struktura (cesta, vila, utvrda). Szűcsi 2015.

²⁹ Petrinc 2009, pp. 122-123, 128-129

³⁰ Garam 1995, 158

naglasiti kako se kasnoavarske tauširane željezne falere pojavljuju duž Dunava i, u nešto manjoj mjeri, uz Tisu. Slična je distribucija i okova garniture s prikazom cirkuskih scena.³³

Svakako, za našu temu možda je najzanimljiviji nalaz iz Donjih Petrovaca (*Bassianae*) u istočnom Srijemu. Prilikom zemljanih radova uz bedem rimske *Bassianae* slučajno je otkrivena zlatna naušnica grozdolikog tipa, ogrlica i devet zlatnih abasidskih dinara. Svi dinari datirani su u razdoblje vladavine Muhameda al-Mahdija, od 780. do 785., osim jednog koji potječe iz doba Haruna al-Rašida, iz 788./789. godinu.³⁴

Sam (zapadni) Srijem najvjerojatnije pripada periferiji Kaganata, i to vrlo vjerojatno njegovu graničnom području. To je vidljivo u nedostatku daljnjeg prostiranja lokaliteta južno od Save kao i u šarolikosti pogrebnih običaja (paralelne pojave paljevinskih ukopa i inhumacijskih groblja na redove) zajednica na tom prostoru. Očekivano je da će se na ovom području odvijati miješanje kulturnih odrednica zbog veće prijemčivosti pograničnog stanovništva za bliske kulturne fenomene i utjecaje.³⁵ Unatoč relativno malom broju lokaliteta i ukupnom broju grobova na tom prostoru, sama mikoregija vrlo je raznolika. Zatičemo zajednice na maloj međusobnoj udaljenosti koje se razlikuju po pogrebnim običajima i nakitnim preferencijama, a čini se, i po funkcijama i statusu zajednice (Šarengrad – Klopare, prema prvim izvješćima, reflektira položaj izravno na Dunavu, blizu povoljnog prostora za prijelaz rijeke, Nuštar reflektira dobrostojeću, imućnu zajednicu, a Privlaka većinski siromašnu ruralnu zajednicu). Zanimljivo je da su Szenthe i Gáll u nedavnoj studiji upravo područje jugoistočne periferije označili kao jedno od nekoliko mogućih središta ili područja obitavanja kasnoavarske elite. Međutim, pritom nisu uključili hrvatske lokalitete.³⁶ Gotovo je sigurno da prostor Srijema i krajem 7. i kroz 8. stoljeće nije bio u potpunosti izoliran od mediteranske/bizantske kulture i komunikacija, što se samo naslućuje u arheološkoj ostavštini:

- Povijesni izvori svjedoče o poslanstvu avarskih diplomata u Bizant i nakon poraza kod Konstantinopola (kako bi čestitali na pobjedi nad Arapima). U to vrijeme primjetno je pojačano prisustvo bizantskog novca i luksuznih predme-

and range of decorative motifs suggest the possibility of their production within the micro-region itself or in its vicinity.³¹

These finds could be dismissed as curiosities or simply explained as certain deviations occurring in the peripheral region in relation to the rest of the Khaganate, but, when viewed in light of certain general indications and historical circumstances, they allow us to delve deeper into the issue of their appearance.

It is important to note that the area of Western Syrmia was part of the famous Danubian limes and its hinterland, which was already during the Roman Empire part of the east-west land corridor.

Furthermore, it seems that the Avars were aware of the Roman communication infrastructure, as settlement patterns near former Roman roads can be observed.³²

Additionally, it is noteworthy that Late Avar iron damascened phalerae have been found along the Danube and, to a lesser extent, the Tisza. A similar distribution is observed with belt fittings depicting circus scenes.³³

Perhaps the most fascinating find for our topic comes from Donji Petrovci (*Bassianae*) in Eastern Syrmia. During earthworks along the ramparts of Roman *Bassianae*, a gold raceme-type earring, a necklace and nine gold Abbasid dinars were uncovered as a chance find. With the exception of one, the dinars date to the reign of Muhammad al-Mahdi (780–785), while the latest coin is from the reign of Harun al-Rashid (788/9).³⁴

(Western) Syrmia itself most likely belonged to the periphery of the Khaganate, potentially serving as a border area. This is evident from the lack of sites extending south of the Sava River and the diversity of burial customs of the communities in this area (parallel occurrences of cremation burials and row-grave inhumation cemeteries in the Syrmia region). It is therefore expected that this area would exhibit a blending of cultural traits due to the greater receptivity of populations living in the borderland to nearby cultural phenomena and influences.³⁵

³¹ Šmalcelj Novaković, Rapan Papeša 2024.

³² For example, during the Avar period the population in Transdanubia settled in locations that were close to the remains of late Roman structures: as many as 60% of early Avar sites in the region are located less than 2 km away from late Roman structures (roads, villa, forts). Szűcsi 2015

³³ Fancsalszky 2007, T. 28, p. 306

³⁴ Bugarski 2014: 607–667

³⁵ Rapan Papeša 2015.

³³ Fancsalszky 2007, str. 306, T. 28.

³⁴ Bugarski 2014, str. 607–667.

³⁵ Rapan Papeša 2015.

³⁶ Szenthe, Gáll 2022, str. 329, sl. 128.

ta u Kaganatu kao i intenzivniji *imitatio imperii* u avarskom materijalnom izričaju.³⁷ Sve to upućuje na uspostavljanje novih odnosa između Bizanta i Kaganata. Kardaras smatra kako je uzrok tome neki zajednički interes, bilo trgovački, vojni ili politički, koji je vjerojatno uzrokovan bugarskom migracijom na Balkan. Naime, Kaganat je Bugarima najbliži upravo na prostoru južne i jugoistočne periferije.³⁸

- Nakon 700. godine puno je teže prepoznati bizantski utjecaj (nedostatak pisanih izvora, nestanak izravne granice s Bizantom), ali arheološki nalazi svjedoče o nastavku komunikacije određene vrste, iako nije jasno kako i zašto se ona odvijala kao ni gdje. Moguće komunikacijske kanale predstavljaju prostor sjeverne Italije, Balkan i prostor sjeverno od Crnog mora, područje Krima. Sjeverna Italija tada je pod langobardskom vlašću, a Langobardi su bili u dobrim odnosima s Bizantom samo do 712. godine, što znači da se dugoročno komunikacija nije mogla odvijati preko tog prostora. Iako se na prvi pogled Balkan čini malo vjerojatnim komunikacijskim kanalom zbog prisustva Bugara od kraja 7. stoljeća, podatak o trgovačkom sporazumu Bugara i Bizanta iz 716. godine potvrđuje da je trgovačka djelatnost bila dovoljno snažna, pa je moguće da su Bizantinci dobili pravo prolaza kroz bugarski teritorij, što je trajalo barem do 756. godine (rat Konstantina V. protiv Bugara). Istodobno, iako je Bugarski Kaganat kontrolirao centralno područje Balkana, a time i većinu komunikacija od srednje Europe prema Bizantu, *Via Militaris* (Singidunum – Konstantinopol) i *Via Egnatia* (Dyrrachium – Konstantinopol) ostale su slobodne, kao i djelomično plovni putovi Morave i Axios. U svakom slučaju, nalazi abasidskih dinara iz druge polovice 8. stoljeća u srpskom Srijemu svjedoče o postojanju nadregionalne trgovine.³⁹ Prostor sjeverno od Crnog mora, koji je prirodna poveznica srednje Europe i auroazijskih stepa, u 8. stoljeću je pod kontrolom Hazara, koji su u dobrim odnosima s Bizantom u drugoj trećini 8. stoljeća.⁴⁰

Despite the relatively small number of sites and graves in the micro-region, the area exhibits remarkable diversity. For example, communities located just short distances from one another display notable differences in burial customs, jewellery preferences, and apparent social functions and statuses (Šarengrad-Klopare, according to initial reports, reflects a location situated directly on the Danube River, near a favourable crossing point; Nuštar reflects a prosperous, affluent community, while Privlaka represents a predominantly impoverished rural community). Interestingly, in a recent study, Szenthe and Gall identified the southeastern periphery as one of several possible centres or habitats of the Late Avar elite, though Croatian sites were not included in their analysis.³⁶ It is almost certain that the Syrmia region, even at the end of the 7th and throughout the 8th century, was not entirely isolated from Mediterranean/Byzantine culture and communication, as is subtly indicated in the archaeological heritage:

- Historical sources testify to the mission of Avar diplomats to Byzantium even after their defeat near Constantinople (to congratulate the Byzantines on their victory over the Arabs). During this time, there was a noticeable increase in the presence of Byzantine coinage and luxury items in the Khaganate, as well as a more intense *imitatio imperii* in Avar material culture.³⁷ All this points to the establishment of new relations between Byzantium and the Khaganate. Kardaras suggests that the cause was likely a shared interest—whether commercial, military or political—probably driven by the migration of the Bulgars to the Balkans. The Khaganate was closest to the Bulgars precisely in the southern and southeastern periphery.³⁸
- After the year 700, it becomes increasingly difficult to trace Byzantine influence (due to the lack of written sources and the disappearance of a direct border with Byzantium), but archaeological finds still testify to some form of ongoing communication—though it is unclear how, why and where it occurred. Possible communication channels included the area of northern Italy, the Balkans and the region north of the Black Sea, particularly the Crimea. Northern Italy was un-

³⁷ Vida 2016, str. 260.

³⁸ Kardaras 2018, str. 138–139.

³⁹ Pohl 2018, str. 252; Bugarski 2014.

⁴⁰ Kardaras 2018, str. 139–150.

³⁶ Szenthe, Gál 2022, Fig. 128, p. 329

³⁷ Vida 2016, p. 260

³⁸ Kardaras 2018, pp. 138-9

- Pitanje same kasnoantičke tradicije unutar Kaganata ostaje otvoreno, osobito za prostor južne periferije Kaganata, za nas konkretno važnog prostora nekadašnje *Pannonia Sirmiensis*. Iako su napadi na Bizant odavno prestali, povijesni izvori navode primjer iz posljednje trećine 7. stoljeća u anegdoti o potomcima taoca i zarobljenika iz Bizanta koje su Avari naselili u okolicu nekadašnjeg Sirmiuma (Sermesiano). Oni se još u drugoj i trećoj generaciji samoidentificiraju kao pripadnici bizantske ekumene, a tako ih prepoznaje i Bizant, koji im nakon lutajuće epizode s Kuverom dopušta povratak na svoj prostor.⁴¹

Navedene povijesne činjenice, opće indicije i arheološki podatci navode na oprezan zaključak da se u slučaju (zapadnog) Srijema radi o prostoru južne periferije Kaganata, koji je dio komunikacijskog koridora s istokom (*Via Militaris*). Bilo uslijed činjenice kako se radi o prostoru snažne (kasno) antičke tradicije, bilo zbog prirode periferije (granična područja obično su prijemčivija za vanjske utjecaje susjednih kultura) i/ili različitosti zajednica koje taj prostor nastanjuju u 8. stoljeću (pa izbor nakita možebitno odražava i različite identitete), u mikroregiji primjećujemo veću sklonost kasnoantičkim/mediteranskim motivima i oblicima unutar kasnoavarskog izričaja. Istodobno, ovaj prostor je dio kasnoavarske distribucijske mreže vezane za tok Dunava i moguće je da su na tom području smješteni određeni produkcijski centri, što bi nekim tamošnjim pripadnicima zajednica omogućilo pristup relativno luksuznom materijalu ili materijalu bolje kvalitete, premda oni sami ne pripadaju klasičnoj eliti, poput one prepoznate u Hortobagy Arkusu. Drugo bi objašnjenje moglo biti da su ti predmeti dostupniji onima koji sudjeluju u njihovoj distribuciji, poput trgovaca.

Time se Srijem kristalizira kao mogući ključ za razumijevanje ne samo razina i načina širenja kasnoantičkog/mediteranskog utjecaja već i načina funkcioniranja periferije Kaganata i različitosti zajednica koje tamo obitavaju, osobito s obzirom na post-avarsko (slavensko) stanovništvo. Istodobno, na manje od 300 km zračne udaljenosti, hrvatski prostor nudi jedinstvenu priliku za istraživanje, jer najkasnije u posljednjoj trećini 8. stoljeća arheološki dokazi ukazuju na pojavu kulturnog kruga koji je iznimno pogodan za usporedbu razina i načina širenja mediteranskog utjecaja u dvama različitim,

der Lombard control, who maintained good relations with Byzantium only until 712, which means that the communication over a longer period of time could not have continued through that region. Although the Balkans may seem an unlikely communication route due to the presence of the Bulgars from the late 7th century, the trade agreement from 716 AD, between the Bulgars and Byzantium, confirms that trade was quite intense, hence possibly granting passage rights to the Byzantines through Bulgarian territory at least until 756 AD (war of Constantine V against the Bulgars). At the same time, and despite the fact that the Bulgarian Khaganate controlled central parts of the Balkans and thus most communication routes between Central Europe and Byzantium, the *Via Militaris* (Sigidunum-Constantinople) and *Via Egnatia* (Dyrrachium-Constantinople) remained open, as did some navigable routes along the Morava and Axios rivers. In any case, the presence of Abbasid dinars from the second half of the 8th century in Serbian Syrmia attests to the existence of supra-regional trade.³⁹ In the 8th century, the area north of the Black Sea was controlled by the Khazars, who had good relations with Byzantium in the third quarter of the 8th century, and this region served as a natural link between Central Europe and the Eurasian steppes.⁴⁰

- The question of the Late Antique tradition within the Khaganate remains unresolved, particularly regarding the southern periphery of the Khaganate, specifically the area of the former *Pannonia Sirmiensis*, which is of particular relevance to our study. Although attacks on Byzantium had long ceased, historical sources mention an event in the last third of the 7th century. In this anecdote, descendants of captives and prisoners from Byzantium, whom the Avars had settled near former Sirmium (Sermesiano), continued to identify themselves as members of the Byzantine oecumene even in the second and third generations, and they were recognized as such by Byzantium, which, after their wandering episode with Kuber, allowed them to return to Byzantine territory.⁴¹

³⁹ Pohl 2018, p. 252, Bugarski 2014

⁴⁰ Kardaras 2018, pp. 139-150

⁴¹ Karadaras 2018, pp. 136-7; Pohl 2018, pp. 331-2

⁴¹ Kardaras 2018, str. 136-137; Pohl 2018, str. 331-332.

a prostorno bliskim kulturnim krugovima: obje kulture nisu prihvatile kršćanstvo, što se očituje u pogrebnim običajima, pokapaju se kosturno i prisutan je snažan utjecaj mediteranskog kulturnog kruga. Naravno, riječ je o horizontu poganskih grobova od posljednje trećine 8. do prve polovice 9. stoljeća na prostoru buduće Starohrvatske Kneževine, gdje je jasno kako mediteranski utjecaj dolazi iz bizantskih gradova dalmatinske teme. Ukratko, na malom prostoru susrećemo dva kulturna izričaja, od kojih se u jednom mediteranski utjecaj pojavljuje većinom neizravno (preko nekadašnjih balkanskih provincija, uz komunikacijski koridor?) dok se u drugom radi o izravnom utjecaju aktivne mediteranske kulture u neposrednoj blizini. Relativno mali broj, ali vrlo raznolikih i zanimljivih lokaliteta na obama područjima omogućuje fokusiranje na detalje kao i lakše uklapanje u povijesni kontekst i opće prilike tog doba te stvara idealnu priliku za formiranje objektivnog okvira i smjernica za utvrđivanje ne samo postojanja kasnoantičkog utjecaja, odnosno utjecaja mediteranske kulture, već i razine tog utjecaja, načina na koji se on dalje širi, potvrđuje i eventualno mijenja u datim materijalnim kulturama.

These historical facts, general indications and archaeological data lead to a cautious conclusion that the western part of Syrmia was a southern periphery of the Khaganate, which formed part of the communication corridor with the East (Via Militaris). Whether due to the fact that this region was strongly rooted in the (Late) Antique tradition, its status as a peripheral region (border areas are more receptive to external influences from neighbouring cultures), and/or the diversity of the communities inhabiting the region in the 8th century (thus the range of jewellery could potentially reflect different identities), we are able to notice a pronounced preference towards Late Antique/Mediterranean motifs and forms in Late Avar material culture within the micro-region. At the same time, this area was part of the Late Avar distribution network tied to the Danube River, and it is possible that certain production centres were located here, granting certain members of the community in this region access to relatively luxurious or higher-quality materials, even if they did not belong to the classical elite, such as those recognized in Hortobágy-Arkuss. Another explanation could be that these items were more accessible to those involved in their distribution, such as traders.

In this context, Syrmia emerges as a potential key to understanding not only the extent and nature of the spread of Late Antique/Mediterranean influence but also the functioning of the periphery of the Khaganate and the diversity of the communities inhabiting it, particularly with regard to the post-Avar (Slavic) population. At the same time, the Croatian territory offers a unique opportunity because, within less than 300 km in a straight line, an archaeological cultural circle emerged during the last third of the 8th century at the latest, which is exceptionally suitable for comparing the extent and ways in which Mediterranean influence spread in two distinct yet spatially close cultural circles: both cultures did not accept Christianity, which is reflected in their burial customs, they had inhumation burials and there is a strong influence of the Mediterranean cultural circle present. This refers specifically to the horizon of pagan graves from the last third of the 8th century to the first half of the 9th century in the area of the future early Croatian principality, where it is evident that Mediterranean influence comes from the Byzantine cities of the Dalmatian theme. In essence, within a small geographical area, we encounter two cultural expressions: in one, the Mediterrane-

an influence primarily appears indirectly (through former Balkan provinces, possibly along a communication corridor?), while in the other, it is a direct influence of an active Mediterranean culture in the immediate vicinity. The relatively small but highly diverse and interesting number of sites in both areas allows for an examination of specific details while also facilitating their integration into the historical context and the broader circumstances of the time. They also provide an ideal opportunity for establishing an objective framework and guidelines for determining not only whether the influence of Late Antique/Mediterranean culture existed, but also at what level and how this influence further spread, was confirmed and potentially changed in the given material cultures.

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