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Some Considerations About the Religion, Tribal Affiliation and Chronology of the Sarmatians of the Great Hungarian Plain

We know almost nothing about the religious beliefs of the Sarmatians living in the eastern part of the Carpathian basin. They probably were very similar to those of the Sarmatian-Alanic population of the Eurasian steppes and of the Scythians, known from Herodotus (Simonenko and Lobai 1991: 64-65; Makkay 1995; both with references to earlier literature). Unfortunately, we have only few archaeological finds and written sources referring to the topic, especially for the groups living in the Carpathian basin.

One of the most interesting archaeological finds of the Sarmatian *Barbaricum* in the Carpathian basin, is grave no. 20 of Szentes-Nagyhegy. The grave goods of this female grave excavated in 1931 by Dezső Csallány, have been published many times and have drawn the attention of several scholars because of their unique character. All the related publications have stressed the importance of the golden foils found around the skull[1] (Párducz 1931: 106; Csallány 1932: 149-52; Párducz 1935: 15-18; Fettich 1953: 73-74, 180-82; Párducz 1956: 140-44; here see fig. 1).

The area of Szentes is very rich in archaeological finds; grave no. 20 was found during the excavation of a cemetery with 424 graves dating back to the Bronze, Sarmatian, German and Avarian Ages. The description of the grave and its finds are based on Párducz' work (1935: 15-18, pl. V), who used Csallány's field notes. The area of the cemetery is located north of Szentes (Csongrád county). Six of the 424 graves belong to the Sarmatian time. Here only grave no. 20 will be dealt with.

According to Csallány (1932) the skeleton, 170 cm long, belonged to a young woman SE-NW oriented and found at the depth of 160 cm. Unfortunately, most of the grave goods have not been preserved: they were lost during

[1] It has been suggested that, besides that of Szentes, only a grave from the Vizesd puszta contained a diadem (Párducz 1956: 149). However, new analyses of the finds have shown that the suggestion was wrong (Vaday 1986).

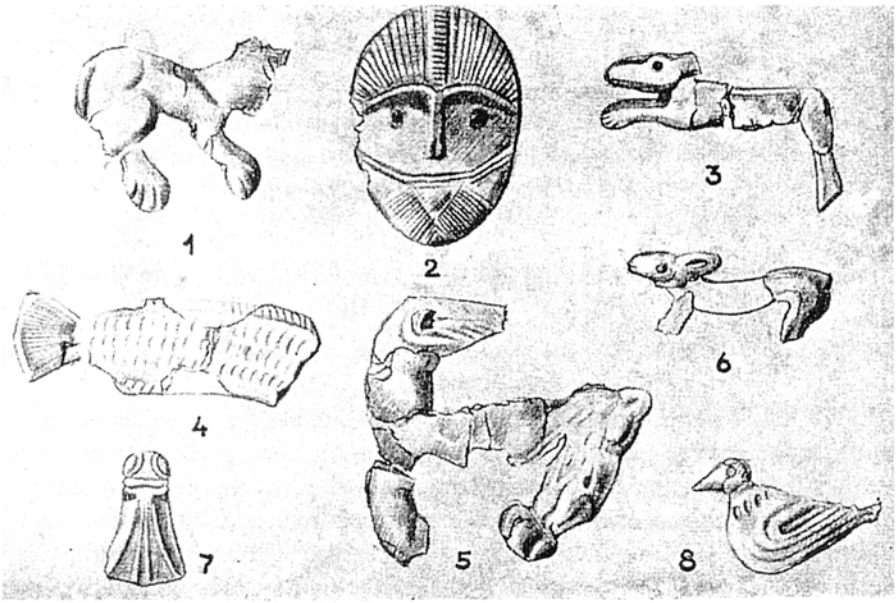

Fig. 1 – Golden decorations of the Szentes-Nagyhegy headgear. (From Fettich 1953: pl. LVIII).

the Second World War (Párducz 1956: 140; Gáspár 1986: 234; Ottó Trogmayer, pers. comm.). In the Koszta József Museum of Szentes we succeeded in finding some small pieces of golden foil attached to pieces of paper with one of the animal figures (probably a dog or a sheep). We were able to study only the copies of the golden objects made on the basis of photographs taken by the restorer László Saliga on the occasion of the exhibition of the Migration Period held in the Szentes Museum (1974-1983). The mountings of the wooden *scrinium* are in good condition.

The description of the objects was made by Párducz before the war, when the photos were taken (Párducz 1956: 140). Also Fettich was able to make drawings of the objects directly from the originals (cf. fig. 1). However, one should be careful in describing the remaining fragments of figures and in using the photos and drawings, because from the very beginning creasy and never flattened pieces of golden foil were attached to pieces of paper cut out according to the suggested shape of the figures.[2] The following reconstruction of the grave goods can be proposed on the basis of the existing descriptions, drawings and photos.[3]

[2] Such is the condition of the only animal figure that has survived.

[3] In the archive of the Koszta József Museum in Szentes glass negatives were made during the excavation and later, and the published photos derive from them. The originals are hardly

There were many human and animal figures stamped out of golden foil found under the skull one next to the other on a surface 17 cm long and 8 cm wide. Some of the figures were turned upside down, others were in their original place. The nearby area was covered with fragments of golden plates and bronze remains. Remains of a brown material (possibly leather) were also noted. Starting from the head up to the right elbow there were almost 150 flitters. It is probable that 'figural ornaments were situated on the headgear, and flitters decorated the veil hanging down from the headgear' (Párducz 1935: 16). The find assemblage contained the following pieces:

1. Three golden masks depicting male faces with moustache and beard,[4] two of which fragmented, one almost complete. Eyes shown by red stone (?) inlay (glass, cf. Párducz 1935: 16; carnelian, id. 1956: 143). The back side of the masks was filled with brown-white material (id. 1935: 16, 27; Fettich 1953: 73, 180) covered by a thin, plain bronze plate. In one of the masks a rivet from the middle of this plate has been preserved. It was used for the attachment of the decoration to the leather. The heads must have been of almost the same size (40 × 28 mm).[5] One of the masks was found in the grave under the skull, lying backside up. The technique of the animal figures mentioned below is the same as that of the three human masks.
2. A bird (22 × 24 mm), one of the figures more easily recognizable. The depiction of the feathers, in particular, can be appreciated (fig. 1.8). In Párducz (1956: XVII.21) and Fettich (1953: LVIII.8) it is described as a dove.
3. A fish, a similarly well-definable figure. In its fragmented form it measures 15 × 50 mm (fig. 1.4; cf. also Párducz 1956: XVII.19; Fettich 1953: LVIII.4).
4. A rabbit, identified by Párducz (1956); head and two legs missing. According to Fettich (1953: 180) it could be a panther. Length of fragment 37 mm (fig. 1.1; cf. also Párducz 1956: XVII.1).
5. A deer (50 mm long), identified as such because of the way of turning its head (fig. 1.5; cf. also ibid.: XVII.20). Eye originally inlaid with red glass or stone *ad analogiam* with the masks.

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better than the published materials, and the photos made during the excavation are not suitable for publication; on examination (no. 4360, first of all), the only clear thing is that some of the golden foils depicting animals were put together in a wrong way after the excavation.

[4] It should be noticed that the description by Párducz (1956: 143) differs from that given in his earlier publications. In the cited article he writes about masks stamped out of bronze covered with a thin golden plate (in earlier works he mentioned masks stamped out of gold): 'Drei bärtige Männerköpfe aus Bronzeblech. Diese Bronzebleche sind mit überaus dünnem Goldblech bedeckt…'.

[5] Párducz (1956: 143) wrongly gives 40 × 23 mm.

6. A running rabbit (length 46 mm). One of rear legs missing, two forelegs partly missing (fig. 1.3; cf. also ibid.: XVII.4).
7. A running rabbit (plate 35 mm long) with large part of body and legs missing (fig. 1.6), identified by Párducz (ibid.: XVII.16).
8. Eight figures of 'tettixes', 'bees', 'flies' or 'cicadas' of approximately the same size (length 22 mm) and shape (fig. 1.7; cf. also ibid.: XVII.2-3, 9-12, 17-18).
9. Four little golden rosettes.[6]
10. Golden flitters, only mentioned in the earliest publications; the plates were spread between the head and the right elbow; photo published by Párducz (ibid.: pls. XVII.22, XVIII.13). These thin plates glued to hard paper can still be seen in the Koszta József Museum of Szentes. Among the creasy, extremely thin plates, figures of animals are present as well. The most characteristic one can be observed in the middle of the upper row on the photo (ibid.: pl. XVII.22). Judging from the latter, it was made with a different technique than the above-mentioned animals, which must have been sewn to the costume. A gilded bronze rivet had been attached to the paper together with these plates (ibid: 144).
11. Two bronze or silver earrings with wired terminals, supplied with a hook and a loop (ibid).[7]
12. Necklace including 81 carnelian, amber and glass beads.
13. Bronze ring for closing the necklace.
14. A swamp's neck-shaped piece of bronze.
15. V-shaped bronze plate with the remains of rivets at the ends, hanging from a bronze ring. Found on the breast, probably being a plate reused as a pendant. (In the earliest publication it is described as 'tettix').
16. An extremely thin, roundish piece stamped out of silver, found on the right shoulder (length 9-10 cm).
17. A large size, wheel-made, biconical spindle-whorl found between right hand and basin.
18. Thick bronze ring found on basin.
19. Beads in chalcedony and chalk decorating the left arm (Párducz 1935: 18 also reported on amber ones, but he did not mention them in later publications).
20. Beads of chalk decorating the right wrinkle; a bronze ring-frame was found at the centre of one of them.
21. Bead decoration of the left foot, wired several times, which includes 369 amber and glass beads.
22. The same from right foot, which includes 343 beads.

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[6] Párducz (1956: 148) already drew attention on the analogous finds from Hungary, which we will not discuss.

[7] Judging from its type, the earrings probably were of silver.

23. Bronze mountings of a *scrinium* (height 20 cm, width 30 cm, depth 19 cm).
24. A wheel-made red beaker at the left foot (h 7.3 cm).
25. Iron tool, placed on the *scrinium*, being possibly its key. According to Párducz (ibid.: pl. XXI.4) it is perhaps a fire striker with a hook-end.
26. Iron knife (length 12 cm).

Even at a first sight it is evident that goods of grave no. 20 can be clearly divided into two parts: grave-goods typical of Sarmatian female burials of the Alföld (Great Hungarian Plain) and pieces of costume brought from the East, and very peculiar in this context. In the former group we can mention the tools (spindle-whorl, iron knife), the bead decoration of the wrinkles and feet, the wheel-made vessel, and the imported Roman *scrinium*: these features can be found in the Sarmatian graves of the Carpathian basin, most of them (knife, spindle, beads etc.) being commonly found all over the region. It was on this basis that Párducz (1956) defined the Szentes-Nagyhegy group as pertaining to the Sarmatians of the Carpathian basin. The ornaments of the lady's headgear are quite different, being unique in the region. We will focus on this headgear trying to find out the possible ritual and ethnic connotations of some of its features such as the animal figures and the human masks.

The Dating of the Grave

Párducz dated the burial to the last third of the second century AD mainly on the basis of the ceramic vessel; a date accepted also by Fettich (1953: 72-73). Later on, in 1944, Párducz revised this dating: 'Though the beaker of Roman origin could allow an earlier dating…' he assigned the burial to the turn of the second-third century on the basis of polyhedral shaped beads (Párducz 1944: 36, 75-76). In 1956 he suggested a more precise date: 180-260/270, and outlined a group of finds characterising the so-called Szentes-Nagyhegy burial group (Párducz 1956).

We know only few Sarmatian assemblages in the Carpathian basin in which a double (or triple) dating has such a determining role as in the case of the Szentes-Nagyhegy burial. Párducz (ibid.) defined the Szentes-Nagyhegy group on the basis of three objects present in the graves: a) the headgear and its components; b) beads; c) the vessel. As we will try to show below, the diadem, or more exactly several of its components was made long time before its deposition in the grave. It is not surprising that Párducz, because of the presence of other objects, considered the graves with 'golden finds' the earliest ones.

We will not discuss all the questions connected with this group, but it must be emphasised that most finds – including the ceramic vessel that Párducz thought so important for the dating (cf. Vaday 1989*b*: 153-55) – can be used for dating only in a very wide sense. The same could be said of the rings with wired terminal, supplied with a hook and a loop representing a common

type of decoration of the second century AD both in Sarmatian (Vaday 1989*b*: 45; Istvánovits 1990: 90) and Roman territories (Zotovič 1995: 234, type II. a). The dating of the belt-ring (Vaday 1989*b*: 64-65) or spindle and knife can not be confined within a short period of the Sarmatian chronology.

In the context of the typical and common Sarmatian finds of the Szentes-Nagyhegy grave, the wooden casket is the main basis for dating the burial. According to Gáspár the *scrinium* was placed into the grave in secondary deposition, so that it cannot be dated earlier than the end of the third century, as caskets with convex hemispherical decoration were not in use before that time (Paulovics 1940; Gáspár 1986: 234-35, Cat. 954, pl. 174). Taking this into consideration as well as the relatively long life of imported metal goods in the Sarmatian milieu, we shall consider the end of the third century as a strict *terminus post quem*. This means that the most probable date of the burial is the fourth century.[8]

The 'Diadem'

Since the moment of its finding it was suggested that the pieces of golden foil found in the female burial of Szentes-Nagyhegy were parts of a diadem or headgear (Csallány 1932: 150). This opinion depended on their position in the grave and on the leather remains on the back of one of the pieces.[9] A reconstruction of the diadem could be seen for a long time (1974-1983) at the Szentes exhibition. Judging from the photographs of the exhibition, the reconstruction was made practically *ad hoc*: the plates were attached to the headgear without recurring to any particular system. No other reconstruction has been tried since then.

Diadems belong to a well-known and very old type of headgear of the Iranian world and other regions. The question of the origin and diffusion of diadems and headgears (which are not the same, actually) is a far-fetched one; here we will only deal with the strictly Sarmatian pieces. We will use the term 'diadem' not in its sense of symbol of royal power, but as a synonym of the headgears used by Sarmatians.[10]

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[8] This is probably the reason why in the exhibition on the Migration Period 'Iranian and Germanic people in South Alföld' the Szentes-Nagyhegy grave was just presented – without taking Párducz' chronology into any consideration – as an assemblage of the fourth century (Archive of Koszta József Museum, Szentes).

[9] Among the comparisons made below, the find from Kobjakovo preserved a few remains of red leather, to which golden plates were attached.

[10] The word 'diadem' is first met in Xenophon to indicate the symbol of royal power. In the works of Latin authors it is used also as the name of a female headgear. For the various definitions of this term cf. Ritter (1965: 6-7).

Recently Jačenko has studied the diadems from Sarmatian graves collecting ten items from the steppe area, which can be dated back to the first-third century AD; and has divided them into two groups. Group 1 consists of pieces found in burials datable to the first-second century, decorated with symbolic animal figures, where burials of 'priest' women from Hohlač and Sokolova Mogila are included. Group 2, later in time, includes diadems of the second-third century relating to the social (not sacral) status of the buried person. Group 1, according to Jačenko (1986), is of particular interest here with reference to the Szentes diadem, though our headgear is *much later* than those of his group.

The direct antecedents of the diadem/headwear from Szentes come from the Sarmatian female graves, from a relatively two well outlined regions:

a) Lower Don:

- barrow Hohlač (Novočerkassk; Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: 133-36);
- Kobjakovo (Rostov-on-Don), barrow 10 (Proxorova and Guguev 1992; Guguev 1992).

b) Kuban region:

- Ust'-Labinskaja, barrow 46 (Werner 1956: 69; Zaseckaja 1975: 16, fig. 3; Guščina and Zaseckaja 1994: 72-73).

The objects were dated to the first-second century AD, and their common features are very important for our topic. They are made of gold, or are covered by golden plates; the motif decorating the diadems includes a Tree of Life (or World Tree) in the centre and different types of animals moving towards it. The bent for placing the animal figures symmetrically is obvious. The piece from the Hohlač barrow is supposed to be a product of a North Pontic antique workshop. The other two pieces may have been produced as Barbarian copies of the latter (Guguev 1992: 118).

The most famous diadem was found in 1864 in the vicinity of Novočerkassk (Lower Don region), from the Hohlač barrow (pl. I*a*, *b*). The assemblage includes a golden torque, two golden bracelets, three golden 'caskets', a golden flacon hanging from a golden chain, a cylindrical jade object decorated with a golden lion's figure, a golden figure of Eros playing a flute, two golden cups, two silver jugs, three broken bronze vessels, a large number of golden plaques decorating the costume, remains of golden thread, pieces of silver, fragments of a terracotta sculpture, and other fragments (Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: 132-33).[11] On the basis of the imported vessels, the assemblage is dated to the second half of the first – beginning of the second century AD (Raev 1978: 94).

[11] In 1962 another similarly rich, contemporary barrow, Sadovyj, was found 2.2 km west of Hohlač (Kapošina 1963).

Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to determine the original location of the Tree of Life and of the animal figures on the diadem from the publications. Some animals were missing from the very beginning and have not been found out in any museum. In one of the early publication (Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: figs. 152-53) two illustrations of the diadem made from the same side differ. From breaking marks and other details it is clear that the illustrations were made from the same side of the diadem, with a slight difference at the angle (pl. I*a*, *b*). But from pl. I*b* it is clear that there is a tree between two deer, whereas on pl. I*a* the tree is missing. In both figures there is a deer on the left, and a goat at the right side of the Tree of Life in the centre. At least since 1922 the situation has changed (Rostovzeff 1922: pl. XXVI.1). In the place of the goat we see a deer, so at the present stage there are deer on both sides of the central, high Tree of Life (Zaseckaja 1975: fig. 2). That can only mean that figures were removed and changed after the finding at least once.[12]

One of the above-mentioned Barbarian copies of the Hohlač diadem is the headgear from Kobjakovo (Rostov-on-Don; fig. 2.1), unearthed in 1987. The woman buried in barrow 10 of the Kobjakovo cemetery must have had sacral functions. Besides the diadem, the following objects have been found: a golden torque, two golden bracelets and a golden ring, a great number of golden decorations (flitters) of the costume, beads and golden plates decorating the footwear, two wooden caskets with bronze mountings, a large number of different kinds of amulets, a golden flacon, decorations and pieces of horse harness, a Chinese mirror, an iron knife, a silver spoon, a wooden vessel, a bell. The barrow is dated to the end of the 1st – beginning of the second century AD (Proxorova and Guguev 1992). The following elements of the diadem have been found: a 12 cm high Tree of Life, six deer, four birds and a great number of flitters. The location of the animals is clear from the observations made during the excavation and because of their symmetrical position.

The other diadem of Barbarian origin was found in 1902, in Ust′-Labinskaja (Zaseckaja 1975: fig. 3), in disturbed grave no. 46. The following objects composed the assemblage: golden flitters decorating the costume, golden beads of cylindrical and other forms, two golden rings, gilded bronze terminal of a belt, a bronze bow-shaped fibula, fragments of a casket, an iron knife, a spearhead, probably pieces of horse harness. On the basis of the fibula the find can be dated to the first half of the second century AD (Guščina and Zaseckaja 1994: 72-73, 18). As to the headgear, a smaller number of elements had been preserved: a large Tree of Life (12.6 × 8 cm) growing out from two symmetrical goats. At the ends of the five branches there are birds; next to the tree there might have been a goat, a deer and a highly stylised, smaller animal

[12] This suggestion is supported by the information kindly provided by B.A. Raev (Novočerkassk), who has explained that the figures are attached to the diadem in such a way that they can be easily removed, and can actually have been changed during restoration.

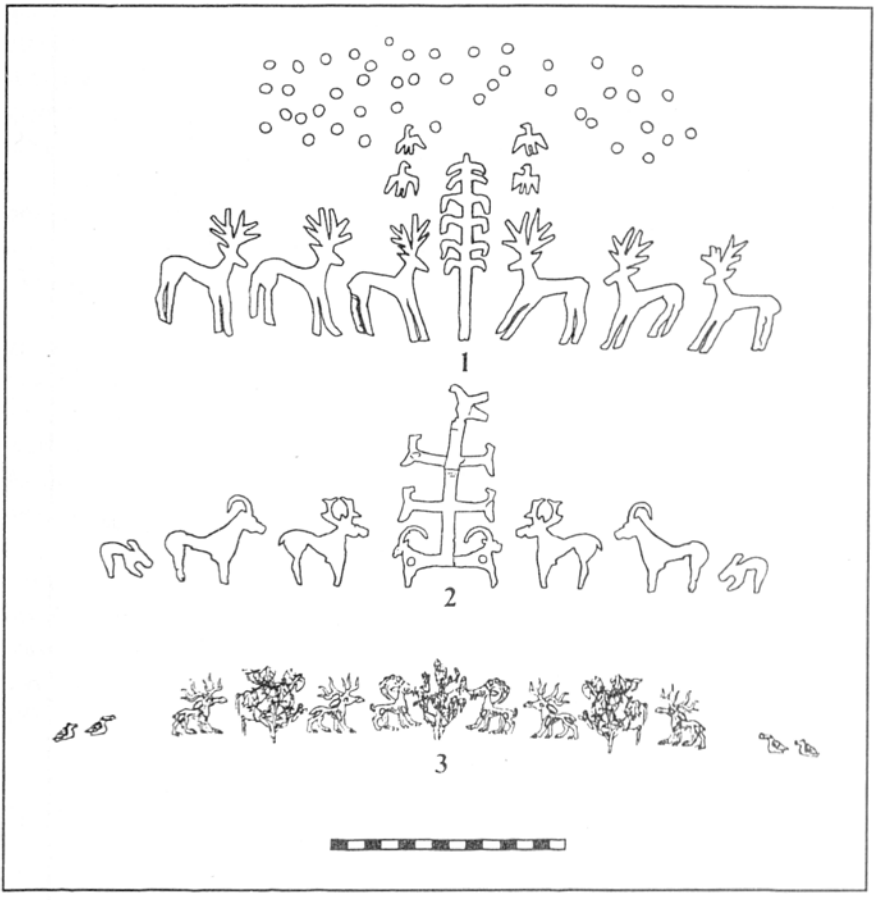


Fig. 2.1 – Diadem from Kobjakovo, Lower Don. (From Proxorova 1994: fig. 1).
2 – Diadem from grave 46 at Ust'-Labinskaja, Kuban. (From Zaseckaja 1975: fig. 3).
3 – Decorations of the diadem from Novočerkassk-Hohlač. (Reconstruction drawing by Zsolt Benke).

identified as a rabbit or a dog. Judging from its movement, it can hardly be a rabbit and more probably an animal of prey was meant. In the course of the reconstruction of the headgear the succession of the animals at both sides of the tree was set out symmetrically (Guguev 1992: fig. 3. 2).

Last but not least, the diadem from grave no. 6 of Tillja Tepe (fig. 3.1) is to be mentioned, which – both from territorial and cultural aspect – is the prototype of the group described above. The priest (?) woman buried in one of the graves of the cemetery at the beginning of the first century AD is unusual in that context because of its orientation (W-E) and deformed skull. Her head, ornamented with a golden crown, was placed on a silver dish. Her earrings are

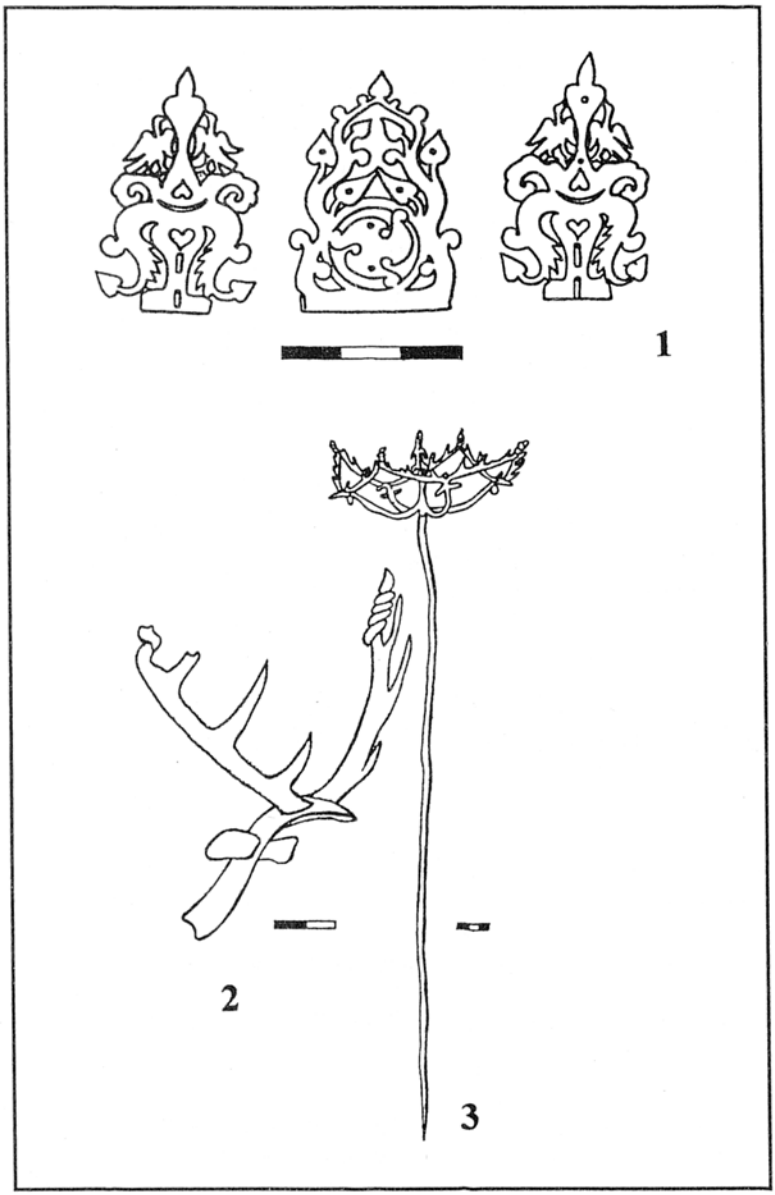


Fig. 3.1 – Detail of the diadem from grave 6 at Tillja Tepe, North Afghanistan. (From Sarianidi 1989: fig. 42).

2, 3 – Pole-top from Pesčanyi, Kuban. (From Ždanovskij 1990: fig. 34,2).

made in the shape of winged Eros. A pair of pendants depicting a goddess (Anāhita?) and fantastic animals was hanging from the headgear. A golden band supported the chin of the dead. The edges of the costume were richly

decorated with golden plates, the ending part of the decoration being a statuette of a winged goddess (Aphrodite?) on the breast. Under the necklace two brooches with a Dionysian scene were found. There were as well pairs of golden bracelets found at the wrinkles and heels. A golden sceptre was placed in the right hand of the dead, and a coin into her left hand. Another coin was found in her mouth. There were two mirrors in the grave: a Chinese type found on the breast, and one made of ivory (with remains of cosmetics), placed together with a silver vessel. Outside the coffin there was a reed basket with cosmetic tools (Sarianidi 1989: 114-18).

We can observe other common features between the Szentes-Nagyhegy grave and the burials of women with sacral function described above: mirrors (usually Chinese), cosmetic tools (in a basket or casket), decoration made of golden plates of the costume (a poorer variant in the case of the 'priest woman' from Szentes). Here, the most important thing for us is the diadem. At the base of the headgear found in grave no. 6 of Tillja Tepe there are palmettes depicting the Tree of Life/World, on top of which there are birds (Sarianidi 1985: figs. 13-15). It should be added that in male grave no. 4 (the arms of which are closely related with the burial from Porogi, as referred to several times in this article), a re-used golden model of a Tree of Life/World, was found along with a feature usual in diadems, i.e. a goat statuette. Both pieces could have been parts of a diadem similar to that from Hohlač (id.: 1989: 89-90).

The Tree of Life

A Tree of Life – a widespread cosmogonic concept of Eurasian peoples – is always present in the centre of the scene. Its branches usually represent the three levels of the Universe (Toporov 1987). As evidence of the common Indo-European roots of this symbol a linguistic phenomenon is cited: a common word ('eia') is used in the whole family of languages (Kuz´mina 1979: 18). Depictions of the tree are frequently met among the strictly-speaking Iranian nomads, and the Sarmatian/Alanic tribes are no exception. It not only decorates the diadems/headgears (Werner 1956: 69-70; Raev and Jačenko 1993: 113); at the top of iron poles of the graves of the Zubovskij-Vozdviženskaja Group (or graves of the territory of the ZVG) in the Kuban region, we find as well stylised trees with four deer at their sides (fig. 2.2; cf. Ždanovskij 1990: 108, 111-12; Guščina and Zaseckaja 1989: 134, pl. XII). According to Raev and Jačenko they can be related to the 'altars' of the Siberian Tagar Culture[13] (open-work

[13] In the cemeteries of this Siberian culture of the sixth-first century BC a large number of such objects have been found. These are open-work objects cast in bronze and decorated with goat or sheep figures. Because of the traces of fire, it has been suggested that they were used as 'altars' for the sacral fire (Martynov 1979: 137).

tree and four ungulates on its sides; fig. 2.3). Recalling these analogies, these authors list as well new, Inner Asian features present in the mentioned group of finds from the Kuban region and relate them with the first wave of Alanic tribe(s) (Raev and Jačenko 1993: 120-21). The prototypes of the pole-tops can be already found in Scythian environment, as for instance, to mention just one piece, the bronze pole-top with five branches found near Dnepropetrovsk and dated to the fourth century BC; cf. figs. 3.2, 3.3. On the top of the branches a bird can be seen, and predatory (?) animals are climbing up the lower part of the branches (Zoloto Stepu 1991: 319, Cat. 121).

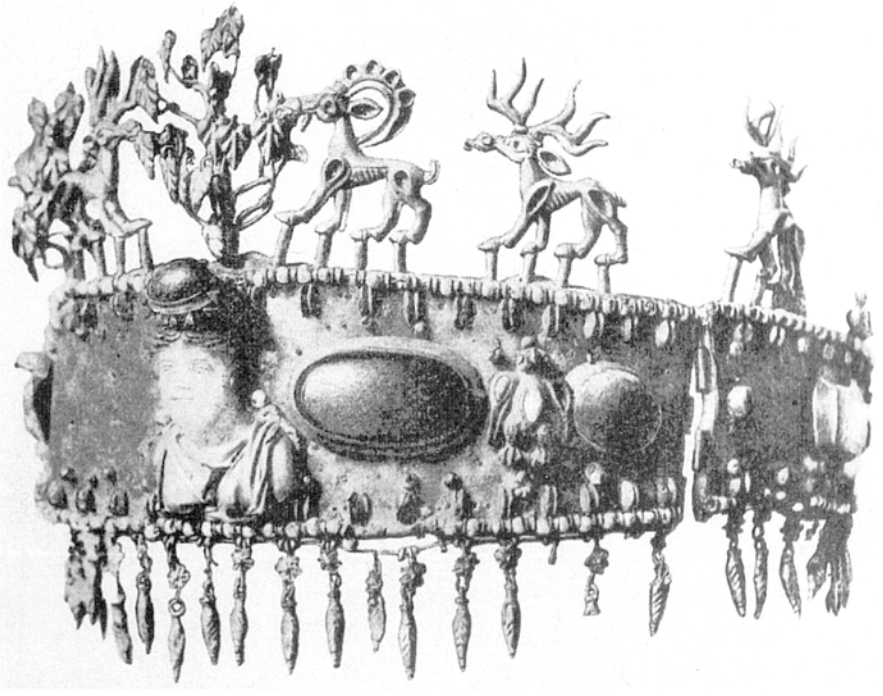
The Tree of Life appears on different objects, as for example, on the spoon from Sokolova Mogila barrow of the first century AD (fig. 4.1). The latter pertains to a sacred person and has yielded a kind of diadem consisting of beads made of semi-precious stones, depicting animals of the nether world – frogs, scarabs and molluscs. (A great number of golden decorations have been also found, as well as flitter decorations of the costume, a large number of amulets, and a mirror, i.e. the usual components of the burials of priest (?) women; cf. Kovpanenko 1986: 85-86, fig. 91).

Another example of an object with sacral meaning is the golden mask found in Šamši (Central Asia) related with nomads and dated to the fourth-fifth century AD (pl. II). This object, though much larger (20.4 × 15.3 cm) is made with the same technique as those from Szentes, that is, with stone inlays glued into a light-coloured, paste-like material. At the sides of the face and on the nose, was pounced the motif of a seven-branched tree (an imitation of a tattoo?). From the same site a temple-pendant is known, which, for its shape and decoration, is a prototype of a typical jewel – the so called 'colt' – of the Eurasian steppes in the Hun Age (Pugačenkova and Rempel 1982: 223, and fig. at pp. 222, 220).[14] It cannot be a chance that a Tree of Life/World is also depicted at the back of a similar decoration, a colt from Verhne-Jabločnoe, a fact which was already emphasised by Werner (1956: 71). Four goats and supposedly two dogs are standing at both sides of the tree, while another animal is sitting at its top (fig. 5.2). Although the composition is different, the goats are very similar to those on another 'colt' from the the Hun Age once kept in the Stroganov Collection (Zaseckaja 1975: 40-41).

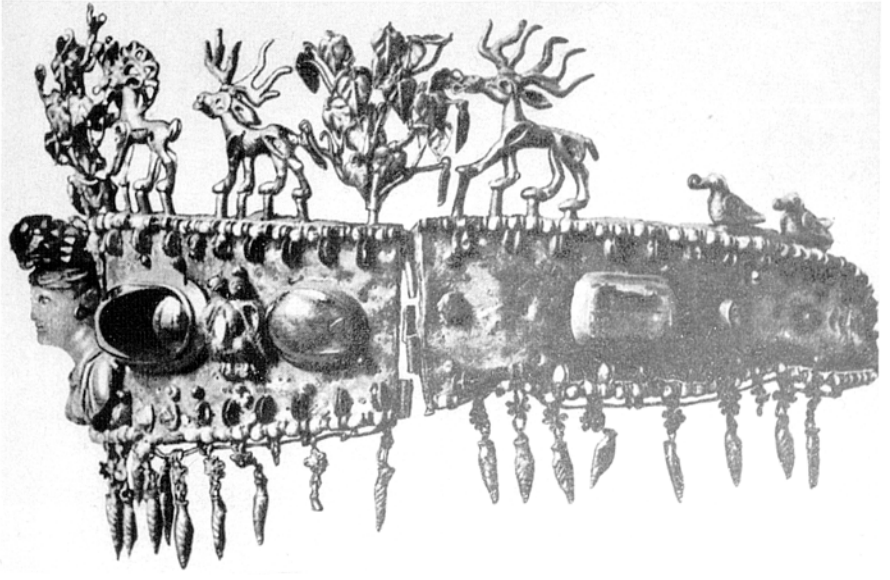
The comparison between the scenes of the Sarmatian diadems and the Hun Age temple pendants, made on the basis of depictions of the Tree of Life/World and of animals (Zaseckaja 1975: 15-16, 35-36;[15] 1994: 62, tables

[14] This find is of special interest, because a similar golden mask was unearthed from a grave in Tiszafüred, Hungary. Unfortunately, it is still unpublished and has been mentioned only in a footnote (Vaday 1989*a*: 131, n. 2).

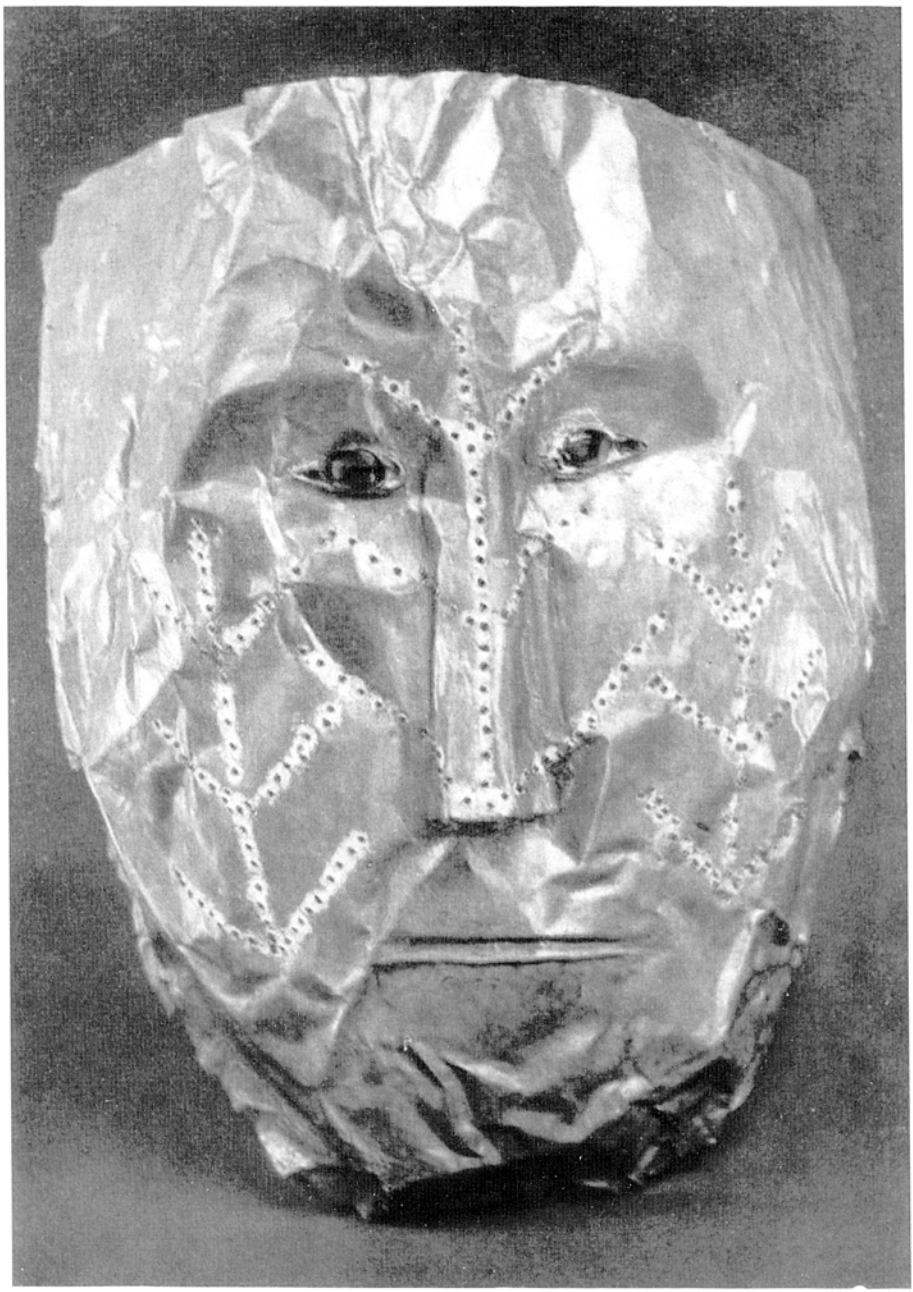
[15] It is still uncertain if these diadems can be integrated with the piece from Csatár (Kovrig 1985: 118), and the headgear found (and later lost) near Balmazújváros, in the Maláton barrow, which has been described as 'golden crown' (Makkay 1985: 48; Nepper, Söregi and Zoltai 1980: 94).



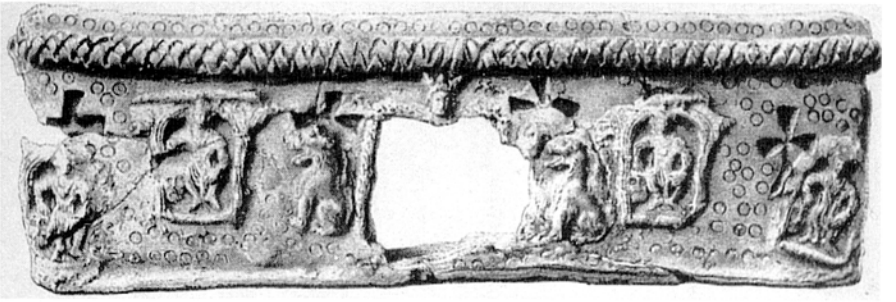
a) Diadem from Novočerkassk, Lower Don. (From Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: fig. 153).



b) Same as preceding. From Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: fig. 152).



Shamshi. Mask with Tree of life. (From Pugačenkova and Rempel´ 1982: 222).



a) Terracotta urn from Afrasiyâb, Uzbekhistan. (From Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: fig. 29).

b) Phalera from Siverskaja, Taman´ Peninsula. (From Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: fig. 105).

Sasanian bronze bust (fifth-seventh century AD) from Lajvard, Mazanderan, Iran. (From Hofkunst 1993: 167).

25.3, 18.4,5) is convincing, especially as regards the one from Verhne-Jabločnoe. The pendant from this locality was found together with a diadem decorated with a figural motif on its upper edge. Zaseckaja listed 23 diadems mainly coming from the female graves of the territory stretching from Kazakhstan to Hungary. The territory of diffusion of the Hun Age diadems is well-defined: they are concentrated on the northern coast of the Black Sea and in Crimea.[16] Their figural decoration is a schematic simplification of the scene with the Tree. This is particularly evident in the diadem from Melitopol′ (fig. 5.1; cf. Zaseckaja 1994: 62-63).

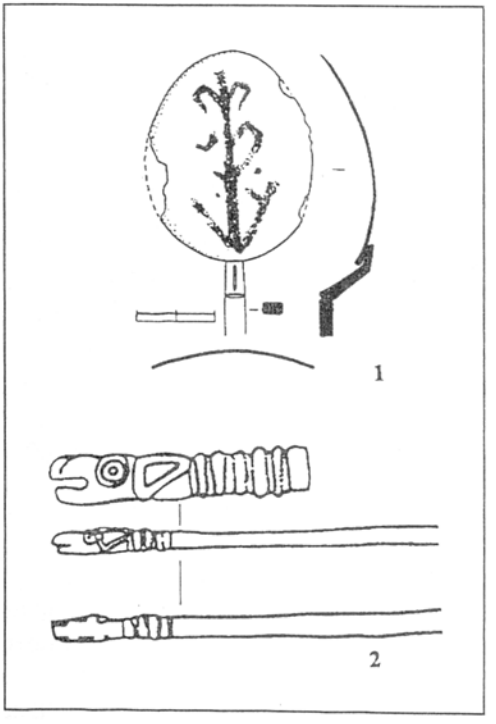
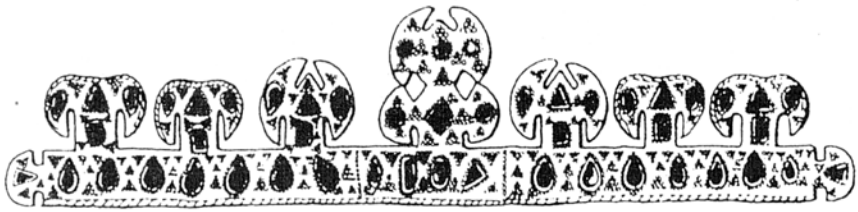


Fig. 4.1 – Spoon from barrow Sokolova Mogila, South Bug. (From Kovpanenko 1986: fig. 91).
2 – Spoon from Pesčanyi, Kuban. (From Ždanovskij 1990: fig. 34,6).

In the light of these elements the genetic connection between the Sarmatian and Hun Age diadems seems to be unquestionable. In relation to the diadems found east of the Volga river, Bóna (1979: 306; 1991: 148; 1993: 141) suggested a Saka-Alanic influence. Although he did not argument his opinion, this is fully supported by the find of a Shamanic grave (Skalon 1961) on lake Batyr (eastern coast of the Caspian Sea). This diadem, which can be considered to be the prototype of the Hunnic ones, comes from an Alanic grave dated to the third century.

The significant presence and outstanding role of the Alans as regards the Hun Age material is not surprising, because at a very early stage of their history Huns and Alans were neighbours in Central Asia and had contacts (Harmatta 1986: IX-X) ones with the others. When the Huns appeared in Europe, the Alans appeared together with them. The latter took a major part in the formation of the material and spiritual culture of the new Hun empire when it became a world power.

[16] The only exception is the diadem from Kanatas.



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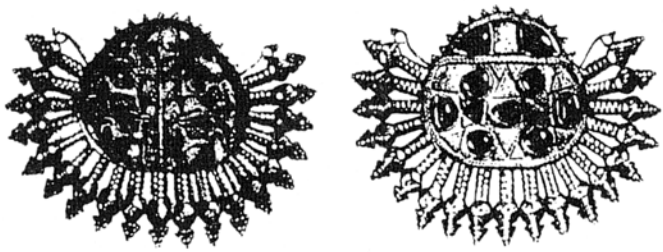

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Fig. 5.1 – Diadem of Hun Age from Melitopol', Azov region. (From Zaseckaja 1994: fig. 7.1).
2 – Verhne-Jabločnoe, Middle Volga. Pendant of Hun Age. (From id. 1975: 36).

When interpreting the Hun Age diadems, we have also to take into consideration the fact that after the fall of the empire this decoration is no longer found (Tomka 1993: 25-26).

To return to the diadem from Szentes-Nagyhegy, we must recognise that it differs from the ones mentioned above, because the Tree is missing. Two possibilities can be suggested:

a) the Szentes diadem was originally decorated with a Tree of Life, but this part of the decoration, made of very thin golden foil, was destroyed or lost in cleaning the grave during the excavation. A few pieces of golden foil were actually found in fragments, but the reconstruction of the original piece, if it ever existed, was probably impossible;

b) there was no tree at all on the headgear. In this case there must have been other elements at the centre of the diadem, possibly the masks;

c) the third possibility is that the tree was already lost during the lifetime of the woman buried in the Nagyhegy grave and replaced with some other objects, as for instance the masks depicting human heads. (We must add that the three masks, put one above the other, measure 12 × 2.8 cm, which is almost

the same size than that of the Trees of Life/World of the diadems from Kobjakovo and Ust'-Labinskaja).

Masks

As we have already mentioned, the only element of the diadem, whose juncture was seen, was a mask (depiction of a human head) on the bronze back of which a small bronze rivet was preserved[17] (Fettich 1953: 73, 180). The eyes of the masks were made of red stone inlays, and it is likely that the same decoration technique was used for the animal figures - a typical example of Sarmatian polychrome style (see below). This is widespread in the Eurasian steppes, but no depictions of human heads similar to those of Szentes are known among the goods of their graves. However, our finds cannot be considered to be unique, because similar objects from later sites are known.

The first who has drawn attention to Hunnic analogies of the faces was Fettich (1953: 74, 181). Werner (1956: 73-74) and later on Otto Maenchen-Helfen also discussed the golden masks from Szentes-Nagyhegy. Comparing our pieces with those from Pokrovsk, Novogrigorevka and Intercisa, Maenchen-Helfen (1973) suggested that 'some of the Hunnic or probably Hunnic masks are of Iranian origin'. He made reference to the big beards which, according to Ammianus Marcellinus (XXXI, 2), do not characterise the Huns, but can be of Scythian or Sarmatian origin (the faces with moustache from Intercisa/Dunaújváros remind the Turks according to Maenchen-Helfen, but are more likely Iranians because of their 'luxuriant' beard; cf. Maenchen-Helfen 1973: 281-86; Bóna 1991: 30; 1993: 28). Strictly speaking, hairdress, beards and moustaches (if they were depicted at all) differ from each other and from those from Szentes. A good analogy with the masks from Szentes was noticed by Fettich (1953: 74, 182) among the Scythian finds from Soloxa; he pointed out that the headgear (or hair?) of the Szentes heads are divided vertically by a ribbon.

After Maenchen-Helfen, Hun Age masks were recently collected by Bóna (1991: 28, fig. 9; 1993: 26, fig. 9; 214-36) and Zaseckaja (1994: 165, figs. 3-4; 183-87, figs. 31.5, 32.9, 35.9; here see figs. 6, 7).

Recently, a new piece could be added to their collection, a bronze basket mounting from grave 41 of the Giberville cemetery, France (fig. 8). This mask is undoubtedly analogous with the eastern pieces, but is included in a more complex composition, as there is an emperor (Valentinianus?) in profile to right. This depiction is an imitation of a late Roman coin. It is followed by a hunting scene, with a rider ready to throw his spear and various animals. The

[17] Unfortunately all the masks belong to the finds lost during the war.

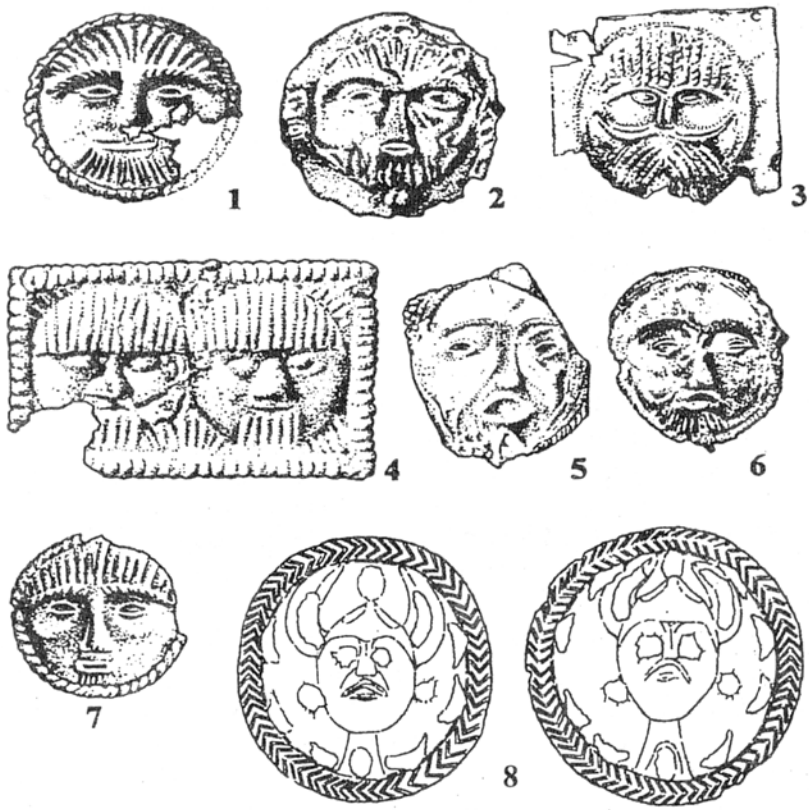


Fig. 6. 1-7 – Masks of Hun Age. (From Bóna 1991: fig. 9; 1993: fig. 9.1).
8 – Masks of the second-third centuries from Rostov-on-Don.
(From Volkov and Guguev 1986: fig. 59, 1-1a).

hunting scene is limited on the right by a figure of a Roman emperor with a *labarum* defeating his enemy (supposedly also an imitation of a coin), symmetrically juxtaposed to the portrait of the emperor. The edge of the plate is perfectly analogous to the Hun Age masks. The basket is attributed at the end of the fourth century, but has been found in secondary deposition in a much later grave of sixth century (Pilet et al. 1993: 159, pl. 9).

The idea of the cut heads is again found on different objects of probably Iranian origin; among these depictions (probably of enemies) we mention a terracotta urn from Afrasyâb, near Samarkand (pl. III*a*) with the repeated image of a king on a throne, keeping a cut head in his right hand (cf. Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: 29, fig. 29), and a Sarmatian phalera from Siverskaja dated to the

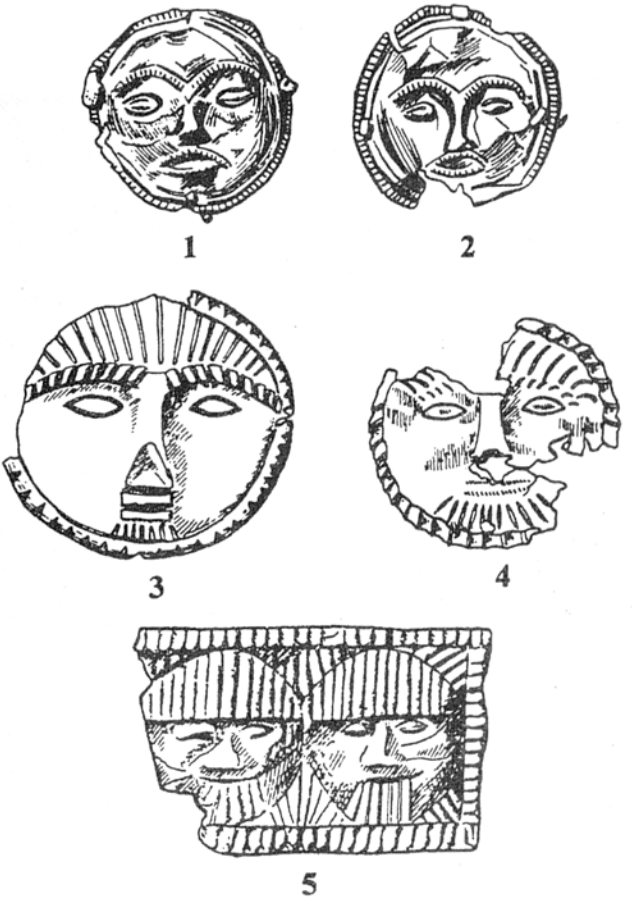


Fig. 7 – Masks of Hun Age. (After Zaseckaja 1994: figs. 3, 4, 31.5, 32.9, 35.9).

second century BC (pl. III*b*). The latter depicts a Dionysos (?) scene, with a cut head lying on a grave-barrow (?) (Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: 106, fig. 105). Besides the images, in the Iranian tradition there are written sources concerning the cut head of the enemy. The latest survey of these sources has been made by Gyula László, who refers to a number of them, from Herodotus to Firdousi (László-Rácz 1977: 66-67).[18]

[18] Of course, the range of written examples could be continued, but it would not fit into the frames of this article. Here we refer only to one case just to illustrate that cut head of the enemy was associated with the 'spirit' of the killed person. When Tomyris, the queen of Massagetae, defeated the last Persian king Kyros, the murderer of her son 'Tomyris filled a skin with human blood, and sought for Cyrus' body among the Persian dead; when she found it, she put his head into the skin, and spoke these words of insult to the dead man: "Though I live

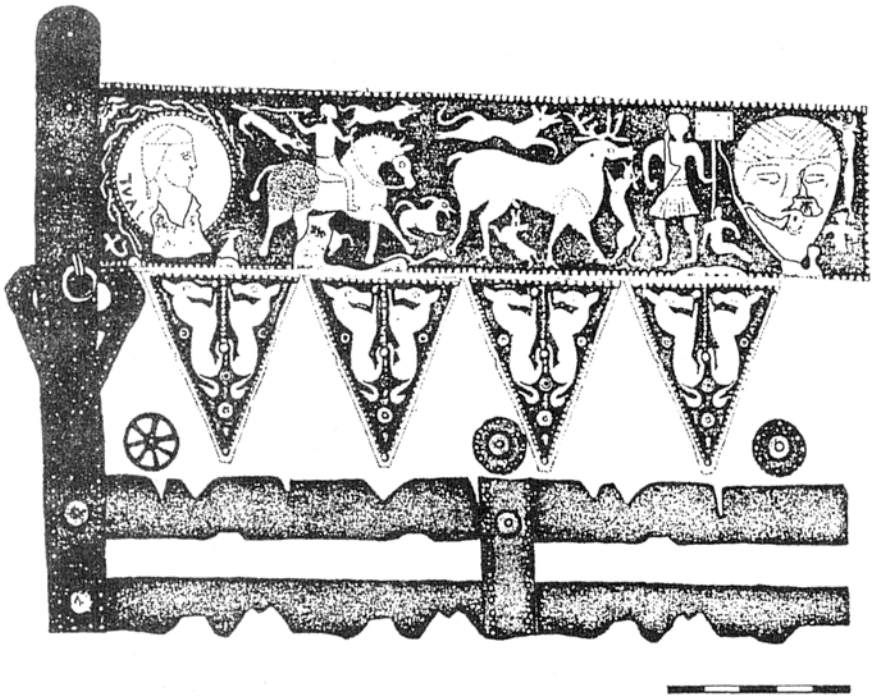


Fig. 8 – Bronze bucket mounting from grave 41 at Giberville, France.
(From Pilet et al. 1993: pl. 9).

The cut of the enemy's head, considered as *pars pro toto,* is not an exclusively Iranian feature, and in fact a peculiar iconography and custom behind it, which can be closely related to our topic, are worth mentioning.

We do not have much information on the function of the mask-shaped mountings of the Hun Age. Besides the basket from Giberville and the casket from Intercisa, the only firm evidence is that twenty-three mountings from barrow 18 of Pokrovsk were unearthed near a skeleton of a horse decorating the harness. Judging from the bits found in barrow 17 of Pokrovsk, in the Novogrigor´evka grave[19] and in the Vladimirskoe assemblage, harness were actually buried (fig. 6.6). Among the harness decorations of the earlier (Alanic)

and conquer thee, though hast undone me, overcaming my son by guile; but even as I threatened, so will I do, and give thee thy fill of blood"' (Herotodus I.214; cf. Godley 1960: 269).

[19] In grave 7 of Novogrigor´evka, 3 mask mountings were unearthed in 1884, two of which have survived (Zaseckaja 1994: 164). At the same time Bóna lists these objects in two parts, as if they had come from two different graves: one piece from the first one and two pieces from the other one (Bóna 1991: 236; 1993: 236).

material there are some 'phalerae' with animal, and not human, depictions. Such are the mountings of the female grave with a 'diadem' from Kobjakovo: a golden plate, cast out of white mastic, was stamped onto lion heads (diam.: 6.3 cm; Proxorova and Guguev 1992: 154, fig. 12.14-15; here see fig. 9). From the technological point of view, they are very close to those from Szentes. Conversely, the technological solution of the Hun Age pieces is not clear. According to the descriptions we have they were made out of bronze plate and covered by a silver or gold foil.

Fig. 9 – Kobjakovo (Lower Don), barrow 10: decorations of horse harness. (From Proxorova and Guguev 1992: figs. 12, 14, 15).

Images of human faces also appear in a Sarmatian grave of this period (first century AD). It has been found near Čuguno-Krepinka (Ukraine, county Donetsk), and has yielded Greek masks in secondary deposition (Zoloto Stepu 1991: 329, Cat. 160). Three antique images cast in bronze had lost their original function, but had gained a new meaning in accordance with some ideas of the Barbarian ideology.

The earliest depictions of human faces decorating a horse harness in the Eurasian steppes come from a catacomb grave found near Rostov-on-Don. The grave was placed into an earlier barrow. A warrior with a deformed skull, oriented north-west and richly supplied with grave-goods was buried here. In one of the corners of the grave-pit pieces of horse harness were found, among which mask mountings. There were three or four round golden plates, with a diameter of about 8-8.5 cm. They were decorated with blue glass and re-used red and grey intaglios (fig. 6.8). The red ones depicted insects and sea-horses, the grey decorations are difficult to interpret. These stones framed the human heads, whose main characteristic and unique feature is that they wear a horned helmet, earrings and necklace. The grave has been dated to the end of the second – beginning of the third century AD (Volkov-Guguev 1986: 73-74, pl. 59.1-10). An iconographic parallel of this depiction is known from a Sasanian bronze bust from Ladjvard (Hofkunst 1993: 167; here see pl. IV).

Also a phalera with a mask on a Sasanian silver plate from Kulagyš in the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, is to be mentioned (fig. 10; cf. Hofkunst 1993: 196, Cat. 54). When it was published, the authors drew the attention on the imitation in the shape of a pendant of the enemy's cut head (Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: 79, fig. 84). This suggestion is supported by the image engraved on a bone plate found in Orlat (Central Asia), which, because of its size and shape, is likely to have served as a bag cover. Its date is uncertain, but it can be attributed to the period between the second century BC and the first century AD (fig. 11; cf. Pugačenkova 1989: 148-51, fig. 71). The cut head hanging from the saddle of one of the riders can be clearly seen.[20] A late analogy of this scene is well known from the jug 2 of the Nagyszentmiklós treasure depicting the winning chieftain (László-Rácz 1977).[21] We cannot be surprised reading Ammianus Marcellinus (XXXI.22), who says of the Alans that they are proud to decorate their battle horses with the scalps of the enemy.

These examples allow us to maintain that the archaic images of Orlat and Nagyszentmiklós, the golden masks of Szentes and the similar examples from the Hun Age can be considered as 'military signs' (the cut heads of the enemies). If this is true, we do not have to look for a relation between the anthropological features of the faces (partly Mongoloid) with the aspect of their creators. If they depict cut heads, it is the enemies who are depicted. This would also explain the difference between the images.

Finally, we must explain the presence of the mask-shaped mountings on the diadem/headgear of grave 20 of Szentes-Nagyhegy (if they were really found there). From the description of the object and from the photo, the masks seem really to be parts of the diadem/headgear. A possible explanation is that it belonged and was an attribute of a cultic person (see the analogous, much richer burials from South Russia), and was the only object of directly eastern origin in the grave, possibly inherited by several generations of priest (?) women (from mother to daughter?). We have mentioned above that similar steppe burials have been dated to the first-second centuries AD, but if the Szentes-Nagyhegy diadem/headgear was brought from South Russia (or the Ukraine), it was probably used for a very long time, possibly more than one hundred years. Other attributes from burials of female cultic persons suggest that a horse harness could have belonged to the woman buried in grave 20 or to her predecessors: after a long use, some elements of the diadem/headgear had to be repaired or replaced. Mask-shaped mountings decorating for centu ries horse harness of Iranian nomads could well be reused for repairing a dia dem/headgear, in the same way as many non-functional reparations made by

[20] The drawing is published by the kind permission of A.I. Semjonov and A.M. Savin.

[21] Recently about the image from Nagyszentmiklós and in connection with this, about Orlat, cf. Makkay 1996: 783.

Fig. 10 – Sasanian silver plate from Kulagyš, Ural. (From Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: fig. 84).

Barbarians lacking proper materials or skill have been observed on artefacts made by Roman professional craftsmen.

Animal figures

In the steppes, the depictions of animals are typical both of the Scythians and Sauromatians. After their disappearance (assimilated by the Sarmatians?) the number of animal images of the Iranian peoples of the steppe decreased. A change in style started in the first century BC, and its golden age can be dated to the first century AD. This new direction, in many ways different from the Scythian and Sauromatian style, is known to the specialist literature as Sarmatian polychrome animal style. For the classification of this group, the main role was played by the Siberian Collection of Peter the Great (Zaseckaja 1980:

52-53). The main characteristic of the style (for a summary on topic and literature, see Moškova 1989: 213) is the strongly stylised depiction of animals, a preference for the fight of animals, the frequent use of coloured inlays (mainly turquoise, sometimes red) for the eyes, thighs, ears etc. of the figures. The Sarmatian polychrome style appeared first in the Lower Volga, North Pontic and later, in its mature form, in the Lower Don region. However, there are different opinions about which tribe introduced this new material: Siraci, Aorsi, Roxolani or Alani (Zaseckaja 1980: 54-55; id. 1989: 40-44, both with further references). In light of this, we agree with the theory which relates this style to the Alanic migrations.

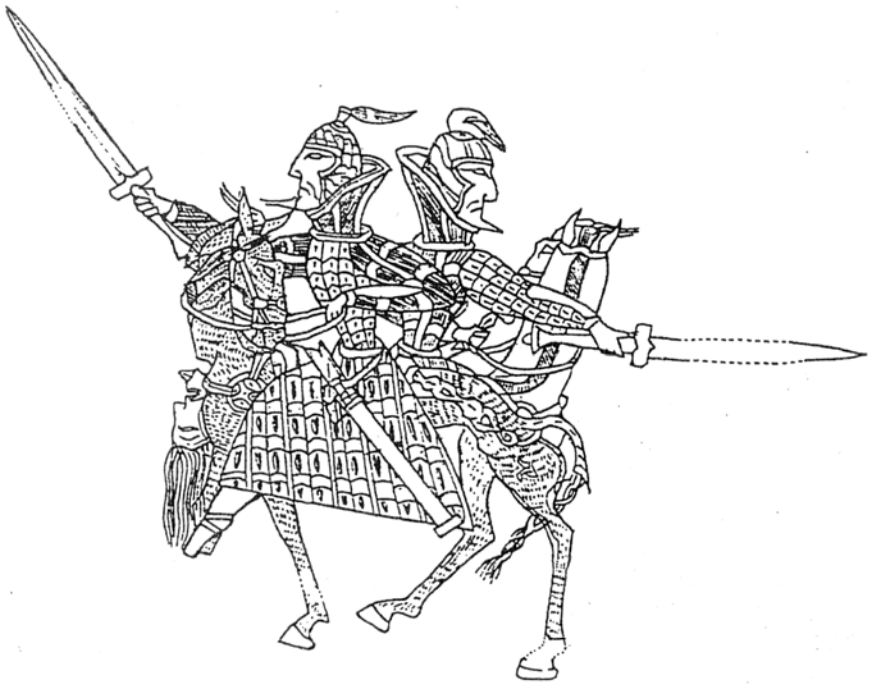


Fig. 11 – Detail of the bone plate from Orlat, Central Asia. (Drawing by A.M. Savin).

Although the animal figures decorating the diadem from Szentes do not belong to the so-called Sarmatian animal style in all their features (they do not depict animal fights; and the details, with the exception of the eyes, are not decorated with stone inlays), they can be related to this group because of the technique used, the stylised depiction of the animals, as well as the way of emphasising the eyes in the masks and the so-called deer. The use of mastics

as material between the thin, golden plate in relief and its bronze base points to the same craft tradition.[22]

Although the technical details are mentioned only rarely in the literature, we have evidence that this technique was used for a long time, e.g. in the territory of the Bosporan Kingdom. The leading role of the North Pontic region in supplying Sarmatians with luxury goods has been often emphasised (Fettich 1953: 73; Párducz 1956: 151; Zaseckaja 1989: 44; Vaday 1989*b*: 73-74), but the importance of Central Asian workshops should not be overlooked. There is evidence of these connections in several burials of the steppe culture. The torque with a diadem from the burial at Kobjakovo (Guguev 1992: 121-26), and the mask from Šamši, recalled above (pl. II), should be mentioned. In the latter the stone inlays of the eyes were also set in a white material. The technique used to manufacture the animal figures from Szentes is not unknown in this region either. In a grave unearthed near the river Karagalinka (near Alma-Ata) a diadem was found in which, according to the literature, the figures of goats with inlaid eyes were joined to a white (lime) base (Bernštam 1940: 23-25).

This technique does not favour a good preservation of the objects. Those stamped out of extremely thin golden foil can be easily damaged. It is often difficult to determine the species of the depicted animals, especially those from Szentes. Despite of this, we can try to examine what kind of animals were depicted on the Szentes headgear.

1. *Bird* (fig. 1.8; cf. also Párducz 1956: XVII. 21).

The bird (possibly a dove) is the less uncertain element of the Szentes-Nagyhegy diadem/headgear. It can be compared with the analogous figures on the Tree of Life in relatively close examples (see the diadems/headgears from Kobjakovo, Ust′-Labinskaja and Hohlač) and in relatively far ones like that from Tillja Tepe (Sarianidi 1985: figs. 13-14). Párducz (1941: XXIII.1; 1956: 148) mentions a golden foil decoration from Hungary cut out in the shape of a bird. Their semantic content is very wide: they symbolyse the upper sphere (upper level of the tree), fertility, etc. The find of a dove's image on the head of the woman buried in grave 20 of the Szentes-Nagyhegy cemetery is further reason for suggesting that originally her diadem/headgear was decorated with a Tree of Life.

2. *Fish* (fig. 1.4 ; cf. also Párducz 1956: XVII.19)

Fish figures – as far as we know – are not found on Sarmatian objects, but are represented in earlier sites: a Scythian object from Vettersfelde

[22] The description of the find from Szentes-Dónát-Nagymágocs points to the same technique (Csallány 1910: 92; Párducz, 1956: 149, refers to the latter).

(fig.12.2) (Minns 1913: fig. 146; Fettich 1953: 181), a relatively big (24.2 cm long) golden figure of a fish from the Oxus Treasure (Zejmal′ 1979: 41, fig. 16; cf. here fig. 12.1) and a decoration of horse harness from a Scythian barrow in Volkivci (fourth century BC) (also 28.4 cm long; cf. Zoloto Stepu 1991: 306, Cat. 94). A massive bronze figure of a fish decorates a shield of the fourth century BC from the vicinity of Ordžonikidze (Meljukova 1989: 92, table 33.20). Therefore, the image from Nagyhegy can be considered unique in the Sarmatian world because of its Iranian roots.

3. *Standing rabbit/panther/wolf* (fig. 1.1; cf. also Párducz 1956: XVII.1).

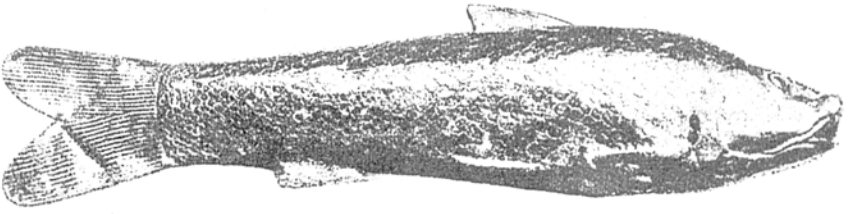
In relation to one of the animals of the Szentes headgear, which has been described as a standing rabbit or panther, István Vörös (Hungarian National Museum) has suggested[23] that the broken leg of the animal was joined to the body in an obviously wrong way; originally the legs must have been pulled under the stomach of the animal. The characteristic way of depicting the paws and the jumping posture are those of a wolf. A similar image was found e.g. in the Lower Volga, among the grave goods of barrow 23 near Carev dated to the beginning of the first century AD (Sergackov 1989: 237, fig. 2/5). The 5.3 cm long, stamped golden plates with inlaid ears and eyes were filled with mastic-like material. The author of the article identified these animals as lions, similar to those on golden plates from Porogi (fig. 13), decorating a sword (Simonenko and Lobai 1991: 10-11, fig. 4.7). Another animal similar to these, depicted in an attacking, jumping pose is found on the handle of the same sword (fig. 14.2). It is close to a find from a robbed grave of Dunaharaszti in Hungary. On this golden plate is depicted a series of very similar, running animals (fig. 14.1; cf. Vaday 1989*a*).

The plate from Dunaharaszti is important not only because of the animals, but especially because of the tamga depicted on it (figs. 14.1; 15.2). A very close comparison can be find again in Porogi (fig. 15.4). Its pattern is associated with king Farzoi of the Alani or Aorsi. The use of tamgas can be traced back to the North Pontic region, and farther east to Inner Asia. It can as well derive from India, with, perhaps, Bactria as an intermediary (Nickel 1973: 167), and is most probably related to the immigration of the Alan tribe(s) (Jačenko 1993: 85-86; Simonenko and Lobai 1991: 71).

A similar tamga to that from Dunaharaszti appears on Kushan coins (Tolstov 1950: 152, fig. 35).[24] Another comparison can be made with the harness

[23] Personal communication. We thank him for his advise and assistance.

[24] Recently a thorough survey and photographs of coins has been published (cf. Alram 1996; Göbl 1984). It is interesting to note that Kushan monarchs are depicted with a strongly deformed skull from the beginning. This observation is important in considering the spread of



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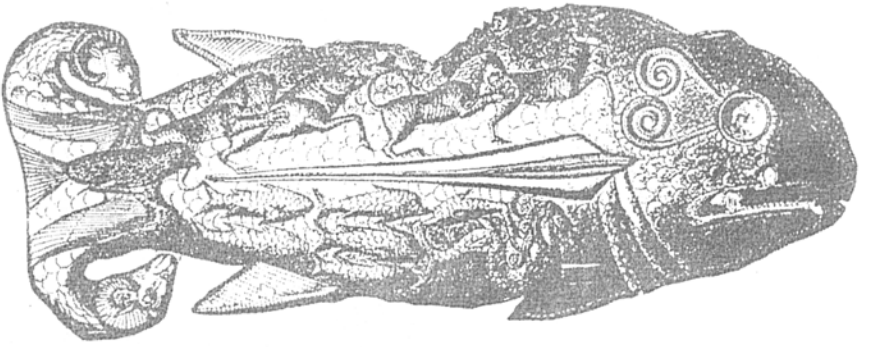

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Fig. 12. 1 – Fish from the Oxus treasure. (From Zejmal' 1979: fig. 16).
2 – Fish from Vettersfelde. (From Minns 1913: fig. 146).

with diadem of the Kobjakovo grave, which is of particular importance because, according to the scholars who have published this burial of the end of the first – beginning of the second centuries ..., the outstandingly rich finds of the Lower Don point to the existence of a Sarmatian tribal centre in this region.

In this period the only Sarmatian tribe whose presence is possible is that of the Alans (Proxorova and Guguev 1992: 160). The distribution of these finds – Central Asia (Kushans), Lower Don region (Kobjakovo, Hohlač), North Western Pontic region (Porogi etc.), Carpathian basin (Dunaharaszti) – points to the way of Alanic expansion and migration. It should be noticed that

tamgas, because the new Sarmatian/Alanic peoples of the Eurasian steppe also knew the deformation of the skull.

in this light it becomes possible to explain a sufficient number of relations between our group of finds with Central Asia (in space) and the Hun Age (in time). These questions will be dealt with again below.

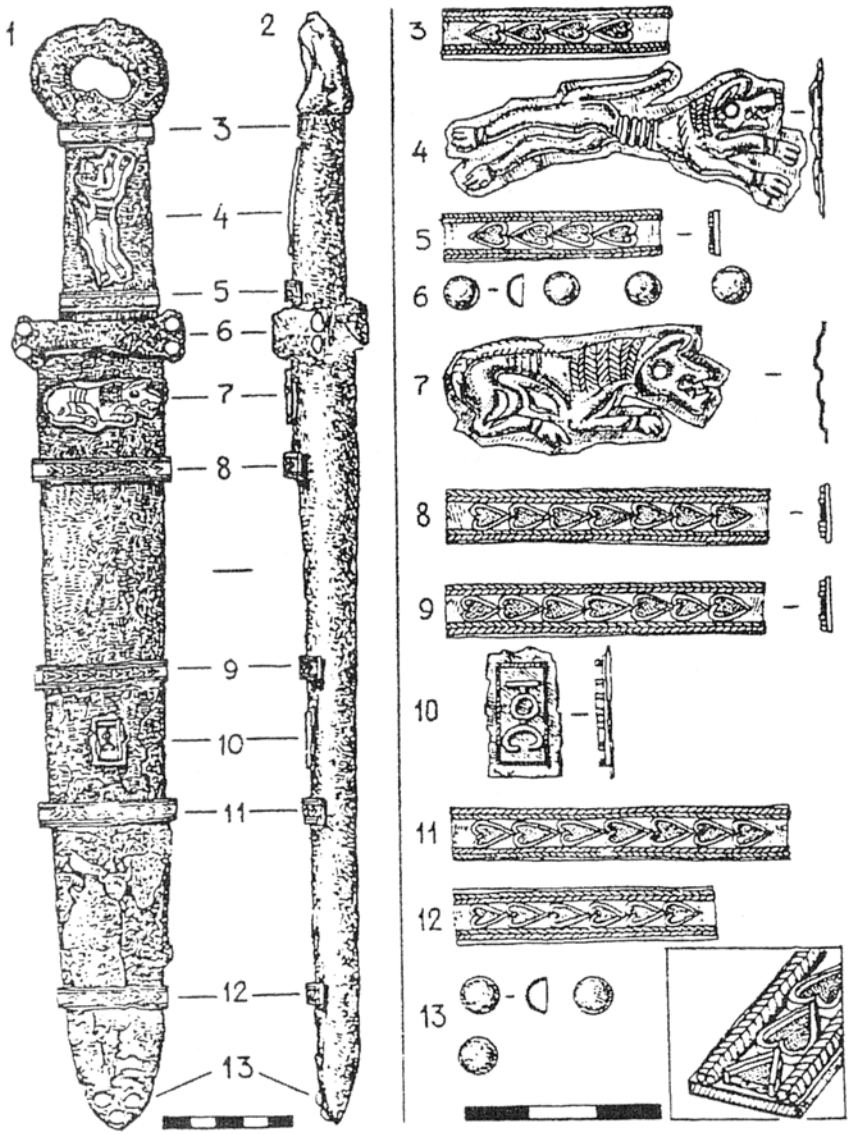

Fig. 13 – Sword with golden plates from Porogi, N-W Pontic Region.
(From Simonenko and Lobai 1991: fig. 4.7).

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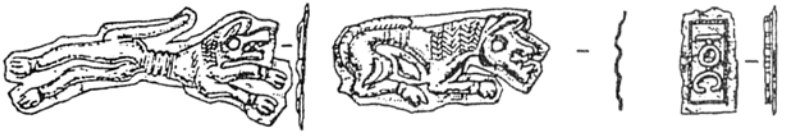

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Fig. 14 – Depiction of wolves: 1. Dunaharaszti. (From Vaday 1989*a*: fig. 1.5); 2. Porogi. (From Simonenko and Lobai 1991: figs. 4.4, 7, 10); 3. Carev, Middle Volga. (From Sergackov 1989: fig. 2.5).

There are other examples of the appearance of the wolf on the objects of this period. The fore part of a wolf decorates a spoon from a female burial of Peščanyi in the Kuban region (in the same burial an iron top with a Tree of Life and four deer was found! Cf. Ždanovskij 1990: 107, fig. 34).

The wolf is an animal of primary importance in Iranian (Scytho-Sarmatian) mythology. Abaev pointed out that the name of Uarhag, the fore-father of the Nart clan, derives from the old Ossetian word meaning 'wolf' (ancient Iranian *vəhrka*). Uarhag is the father of the twins Ahsar and Ahsartag and this allows us to draw a parallel with the totemic myth of Romulus and Remus brought up by a wolf (Abaev 1981: 4).

4. *Deer* (fig. 1.5; cf. also Párducz 1956: XVII. 20).

According to the published material on the Szentes-Nagyhegy grave, one of the plates, judging from the characteristic move of the animal, whose head is turned back, depicts a deer. In István Vörös' opinion this identification is

doubtful. The forepart of the animal rather reminds a horse. Although Fettich (1953: 73) writes that the antlers are broken, no trace of them is visible on the pictures. The forelegs do not fit to the body, and the figure must have been reconstructed in a wrong way. The forepart of the animal could well be that of a deer, but a horse and a fragment of another animal were stuck to it. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the back legs represent a realistic depiction of a predatory which cannot be part of a deer/horse.

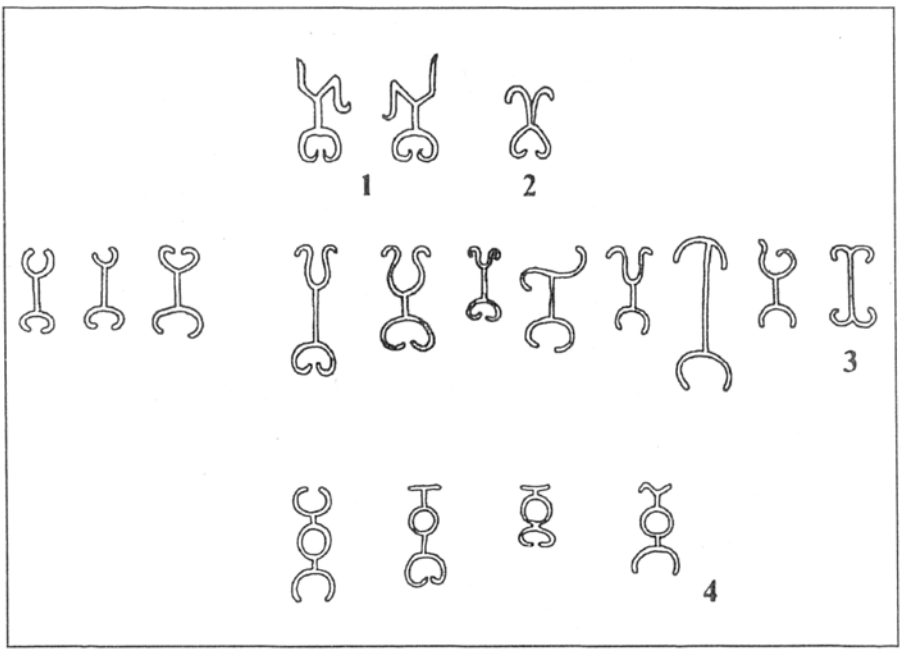

Fig. 15 – Tamgas: 1. Kobjakovo, barrow 10. (From Proxorova and Guguev 1992: fig. 12.9); 2. Dunaharaszti. (From Vaday 1989*a*: fig. 1.5); 3. Farzoi. (From Simonenko and Lobai 1991: fig. 32); 4. Inismei. (Ibid.: fig. 33).

The deer is undoubtedly one of the most popular animals on both Scythian and Sarmatian artefacts. It usually appears on the diadems, as in the case of Kobjakovo, Ust´-Labinskaja and Hohlač. Horse representations are also frequent in the Scythian or Sauromatian animal style. In the Dunaharaszti burial, the representation of one more animal is documented: a horse (?) head is in fact depicted on a golden concave plate (fig. 16.2; cf. Vaday 1989*a*: pl. 1.1). The way of showing the characteristic parts of a horse head, its shape, the ears, and the stone inlays of the ears and eyes find several comparisons in the North Pontic material and seem to be very common in the Scytho-Sarmatian art. Here we mention only some examples. A very similar horse is

found as a terminal of the Porogi torque (fig. 18; cf. Simonenko and Lobai 1991: figs. 15-16, pl. 20), and another decorates a silver cup from the same burial (fig. 17; cf. ibid.: fig. 16, pl. 22); a third one decorates the extremity of a golden torque from the 'Siberian' collection of the Hermitage Museum (fig. 16.3; cf. Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: 49, fig. 52).

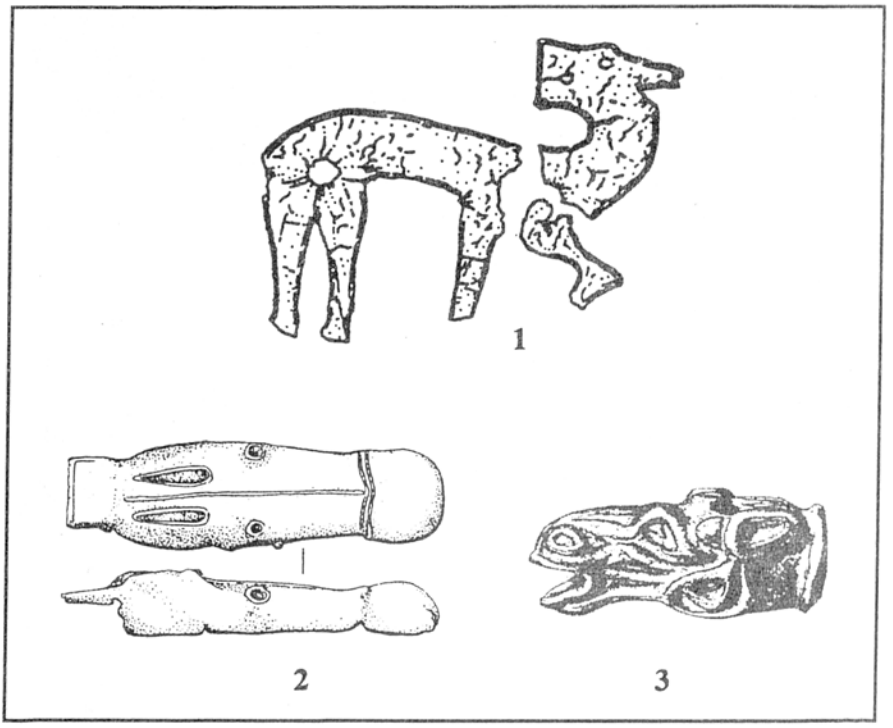

Fig. 16. 1 – Nagornoe, Lower Danube. Golden plate from barrow 1. (From Gudkova and Fokeev 1984: fig. 13.3).
2 – Dunaharaszti. Golden plate depicting a horse head. (From Vaday 1989*a*: pl. 1.1).
3 – Terminal of the torque from the Siberian Collection of the Hermitage. (From Tolstoj and Kondakov 1890: fig. 52).

The only analogy about the move of this 'deer' (with its head turned back) is found at Nagornoe (Budžak steppe; fig. 16.1) where the grave in barrow 1 yielded fragments of three animal figures (5 × 4.5 cm) cut out of golden foil. They are standing with one of their forefeet lifted up, their head turning back (Gudkova and Fokeev 1984: 41, fig. 13.3). It is not clear which animals they are, possibly wolves.

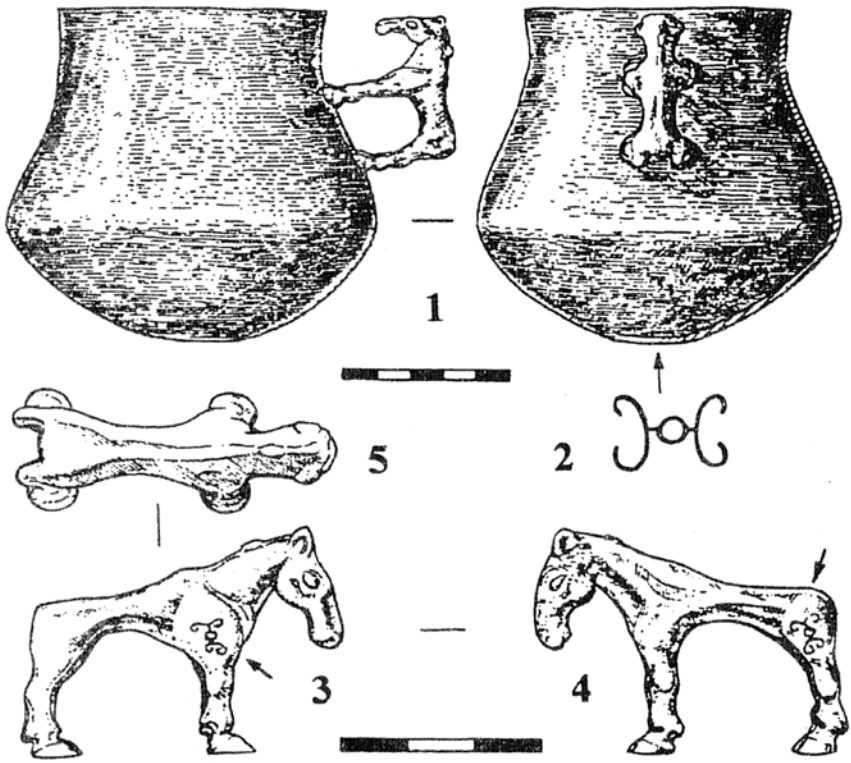

Fig. 17 – Cup from Porogi. (From Simonenko and Lobai 1991: fig. 16).

5. *Running rabbit/predatory* (fig. 1.3,6; cf. also Párducz 1956: pl. XVII. 4, 16).

Besides the figure of the 'standing rabbit' discussed above there are two more figures in the Szentes find identified as rabbits. Both of them are moving, running. According to Vörös their move is more typical of a predatory than of a rabbit. The long ears characteristic of rabbits are missing. The same can be said of the smallest animal figure on the Ust'-Labinskaja diadem (fig. 2.2), which was also interpreted as a rabbit but can be better identified, on the basis of the pose, as a predatory.

6. *Tettix* (fig 1.7; cf. also Párducz 1956: pl. XVII. 2-3, 9-12, 17-18).

The diadem of Szentes was also decorated by eight 'tettix-shaped', golden plates. Párducz (1941: 20, 56; XXIX, 55, 57) published similar thin plates from

Átány.[25] Tettix [cicada]- shaped decorations were widespread in the Greek-Roman world, and are met in great number among the Hun Age materials. Their

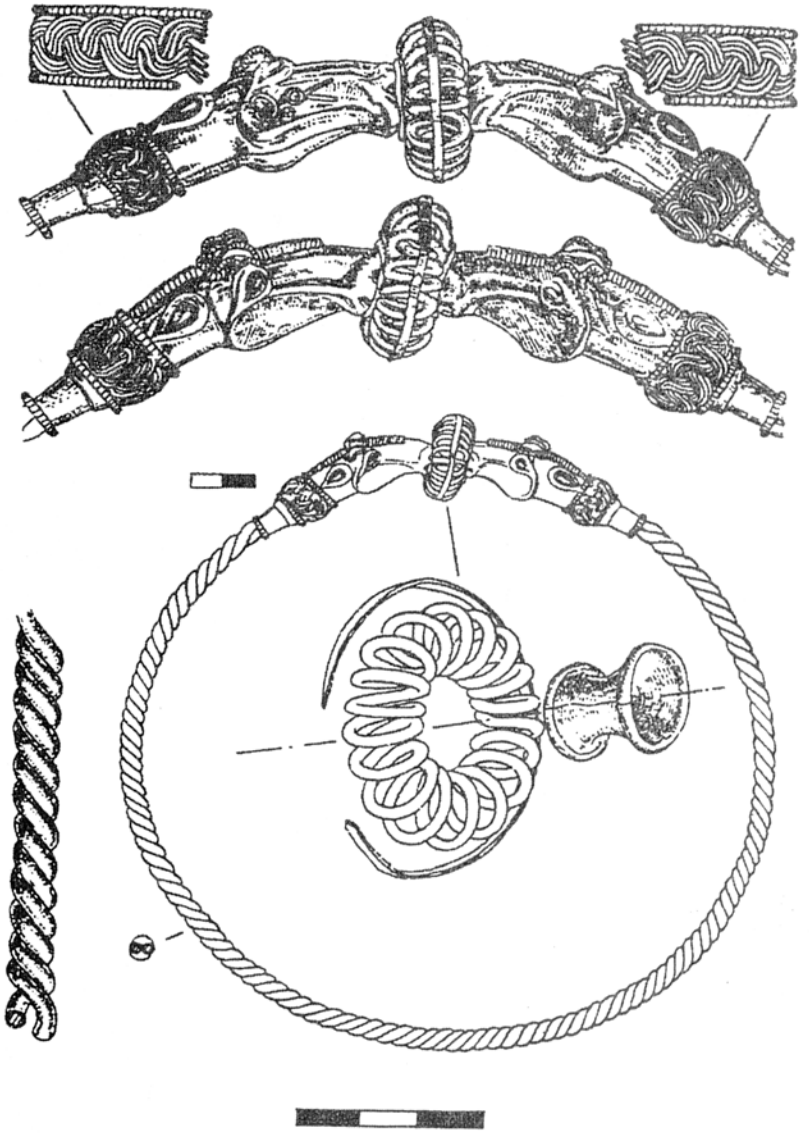

Fig. 18 – Torque from Porogi. (From Simonenko and Lobai 1991: fig. 15).

[25] Párducz (1956: 148) also drew attention on their relationship with those from Szentes.

depiction in these two cultural groups is different, but despite of this, the origin of the Hun Age pieces has been also looked for in the Greek-Sarmatian-Alanic material (Bóna 1991: 196-97; 1993: 181-82; Vaday 1989*b*: 96).

In the case of the objects from Szentes-Nagyhegy we are not sure that they are tettixes at all. The original pieces have been lost, and the photos and drawings found in the literature are not convincing. In this connection we would like to draw the attention on the flitters of the frequently mentioned grave 10 of Kobjakovo where we meet the type which can be related to the Nagyhegy ones (Proxorova and Guguev 1992: fig. 8.10). If we also take into consideration that there are some rosettes, very similar to those from the Átány find (six-petalled rosettes), it could be suggested that the 'tettixes' from Nagyhegy and Átány simply are the usual, typical elements of the golden foil decoration found in Sarmatian graves and that they have nothing to do with the 'classical' cicadas commonly found in the Hun Age.

Conclusions

To sum up, the woman buried in grave 20 of Szentes-Nagyhegy was, in all probability, a priest - similarly to the persons wearing analogous objects found in the east (Hohlač, Ust´-Labinskaja, Kobjakovo). The composition and the sacral-symbolic meaning of the diadems of the limited number of similar assemblages point to a religious function, but the Nagyhegy burial is later than them. As a consequence, such a feature as the Tree of Life found in the assemblages is missing.

In this article we have dealt with a special group of finds with sacral functions related to the persons buried in the graves as the tamgas and animals on diadems/headgears. All the elements of the Szentes diadem – both the animals and the masks which could be added to the diadem as later replacements – belong to those rare finds which reached the Carpathian basin from the steppe. A similar find is that from Dunaharaszti, which can be dated as well at the very end of the first – beginning of the second century.

The types and techniques, such as the important and relatively less spread phenomena like the use of tamgas and the deformation of the skull, lead us back to the territory of Central Asia. In addition, changes in the burial rite have been observed in the steppe in the period of use of our finds, that is to say at the end of the first – beginning of the second century. Both in the Eurasian steppe and in the Carpathian basin finds genetically close to the earliest types of objects can be observed in the Hun Age material. In all probability the owners of these objects can be associated with a population only just migrating from East to West, the Alans, who at the end of the first – beginning of the second century AD moved to the Carpathian basin as a consequence of the events of the Dacian war. The tamga of the Dunaharaszti burial points to

an Alanic group related to the clan (?) of the Farzoi and Inismei moving from the northern coast of the Black Sea. This group of finds has not been outlined yet in the research work carried out in Hungary, despite of the fact that much has been written on the so-called first period of the Sarmatian Age, the 'horizon of golden finds'.

The route of the Roxolanic (=Alanic?) expansion of the end of the first – beginning of the second century can be localised in the Lower Danube. The sword ornamented with animal figures and a tamga found in Rošava Dragana (Simonenko and Lobai 1991: 39, 63, pl. 38) received as a present (?) by the Thracians refers to the fact that the Alans (Roxolans?) were looking for allies. Another fact that also points to the Danubian route, is Hadrian's step, who destroyed the new bridge across the Danube at Turnu-Severin (Alföldi 1942: 189).

The most fearful fighters on his eastern border must have been attractive allies for Decebal. The outstandingly rich horizon of finds dating to this period (Porogi is only one of them) suggests the possibility that the Dacians paid a high price to their allies. However, we can reasonably take it for granted that the Alans took part in the battles (cf. recently Makkay 1996: 745).

Besides the archaeological material, Roman sources also refer to the immigration of newcomers from the East. After Trajan's Dacian campaign we know of fights against the Jazygi (Alföldi 1942: 189, with further literature). After Trajan's death, in AD 117 the Roxolans – the white Alans – started moving. Their advance was serious enough to cause the destruction of the bridge mentioned above and to make Hadrian think of sacrificing Dacia in the interests of peace. The strength of the newcomers is shown by the fact that they made the Empire pay them a new, increased tax (Alföldi 1942: 189-90). In the background of these strong military actions new political situation can be envisaged. From this period on, that is to say, from the beginning of the second century, we have to count on the continuous presence of the Alans in the Great Hungarian Plain at least up to the Hun Age.

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