

THE SCORDISCI AND THE BASTARNAE

According to the ancient written sources, the Bastarnae, by the end of the third century inhabiting the area north of the Danube confluence, first came to the Central Balkans in 179 BC. The Macedonian king Phillip V developed an ambitious plan to annihilate the Dardanians, his constant enemies, and to attack the Romans in Italy. After several years of preparation, he persuaded the martial Bastarnae to take part in this campaign. It happened so that Phillip died in 179, and the Bastarnae crossed the Danube and arrived to the lands of the Dardanians. The king had previously planned to inhabit them in Dardania and subsequently use them in the battles against the Romans. In spite of the help they received from the Scordisci and the Thracians, the Bastarnae were defeated by the Dardanians after a three-year long struggle and retreated into their lands. A decade or so later they approached Macedonia as mercenaries, upon the call of Phillip's heir Perseus.

The attempt to use them in the war against the Romans failed once more, since the king refused to pay the agreed sum, so the gathered warriors left.

In the subsequent decades, no relevant data are recorded. Of relative interest may be the episode taking place in 29/28 BC, from the campaign of Marcus Crassus against the Bastarnae. These events took place on the territory of the Moesians, not far from the lands of the Lesser Scordisci – Mikroi Skordiskoi (Vulić 1927; Papazoglu 1978, 161 sqq., 441 sqq.).

At the time of the war with the Dardanians, as stated above, the Scordisci aided the Bastarnae for, according to Livius, they were not alien neither in language nor in customs (Liv. XL, 57, 7). So they were allies against a common enemy and, being warriors, they had a lot else in common. These are, in short, the basic historical facts testifying for the presence of the Bastarnae in the Central Balkans and their connections to the area. This situation confronted to the archaeological data, the picture is somewhat different, as is often the case. The Bastarnae left no trace in Dardania, and it also seems that they did not bring with them any of the objects of the Dardanian origin. One of the reasons for such a situation is of course our meager knowledge of the material culture of the Dardanians during the III and II centuries BC. On the other hand, we have a lot more data on the Scordisci. They belong to the Celtic La Tène culture, at that time far surpassing their frontiers. In the Germanic lands and the wide areas of the northern and eastern Europe, the La Tène forms are well represented, either as imports or, much more often, as the products of local workshops executed after the Celtic models. Therefore some finds from the territory of the Scordisci have numerous analogies from the remote areas, customarily associated to the Central European chronology. A typical example is the wire fibula of Middle La Tène scheme, present over a wide area and long in usage as a popular piece of jewelry (Hachmann 1961, T2).

A type of fibula of special importance is present in the Balkans, especially among the Scordisci, and further east, towards the lands inhabited by the Bastarnae. These are the spear-type fibulae of the Middle La Tène scheme, whose place in the litera-



Fig. 1. Scordisci and Bastarnae at the end of the second and the first century BC (after Popović 1994a; Babeš 1993; Kasparova 1981)

ture is secured by the authors from these parts, from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Yugoslavia and Rumania to Moldavia, Ukraine and Russia. On this occasion, along with the spear-type fibulae and the problem of their chronology, some other finds will be discussed, associating the area of the Balkans to the territories around Siret, Dneŝtr and Dnepr, and the cultures Poienesti–Lukasevka and Zarubintsy.

One of the starting points in solving the problem of the origin of the spear-type fibulae still are the finds from the graves on the site Gostilj – Vele Ledine in Montenegro. Đ. Basler published the results of the excavations of this necropolis in 1969, and dated it into the period between the last quarter of the third and the first half of the second centuries, or, speaking more broadly, from the middle of the third century, all through the second century BC (Basler 1969, 10). Four years later, M. Garaŝanin, on the base of the analysis of the numismatic finds, Hellenistic pottery and jewelry, established the chronological framework of this necropolis and determined three phases: I – cca. 200–160, IIa – cca. 160–125, and IIb – the last decades of the second century BC (Garaŝanin 1973, 23). The Illyrian fibulae, with the characteristic construction (fig. 2.1), appear probably from the end of the third century BC, and the pieces of this type with the emphasized lanceolate arch are especially frequent during the phase IIa. They are of larger size and regularly found in graves of male deceased. The fibulae of the Middle La Tène scheme are characteristic of the phase IIa, though it is possible they appeared as early as in the previous phase. They are of smaller size, the lanceolate arch is modeled more discreetly, they are often made of silver, and are, as a rule, found in the graves of the female deceased (fig. 2.2). In the group graves Mahrevići and Krajčinovići both types of fibulae are present, dated approximately into the second half or the end of the second century BC (fig. 2.3–5; Truhelka 1912; Zotović 1987, 56). The fibulae from the other sites, such as Momiŝići, Gorica, Vir by Posušje or the cemeteries at Una (fig. 2.6), are of lesser importance, since they encompass a wider chronological span or belong to the later period (Popović 1994, 59 sq.).

All the spear-formed fibulae of the Middle La Tène scheme from the territory of the Scordisci correspond to the Late La Tène period. The fibula from the grave 4 at the necropolis at Karaburma in Belgrade, is dated into the first century BC (fig. 2.7; Todorović 1972, 62; Boŝić 1981, Tab. 3; Popović 1994, 60). Probably due to a mistake, on the chronological chart the grave 4 is placed into the transitional period from the third to the second century BC (Todorović 1972, 86; cf. Kasparova 1981, Ris 3). A chance find originates from Novi Banovci, and an almost identical fibula has recently been discovered from a settlement near

Sremska Mitrovica (fig. 2.11–12). The settlement is dated by coins and some other finds into the end of the first century BC or the beginning of the next (Brukner 1995, 102, T. 23.231). The rest of the finds cited here of the lanceolate fibulae belong to the Late La Tène period, but with no precise data. A certain concentration of the fibulae of this type along the Danube, east of the Iron Gates, is of special interest (Popović 1994, 60 sqq.). On the site Ljubičevac–Ostrvo five pieces have been discovered, along with the rest of the material, belonging to the totally devastated Late La Tène necropolis (fig. 2.8–10). The closer chronological determination of these fibulae may be reached via the fact that they do not appear in a single grave of the nearby cemeteries, such as Vajuga–Pesak or Ajmana and Konopiŝte by Mala Vrbica, dated into the second half or the end of the first century BC (id. 1994, 62).

Further east, sporadic finds of these fibulae are registered in the Daco–Getan area and the territory of the culture Poienesti–Lukasevka (fig. 2.13, Popović 1994, 69; Babeŝ 1993, 95, T. 51.25). The special interest in the lanceolate fibulae found in the Balkans was due to the great number of the pieces of this type discovered in the necropolises around Dnepr and Pripjat. Therefore the fibulae from these parts were labeled as type Zarubintsyi, after the name of the culture (fig. 2.14–19). According to the analogies from the Balkans, the lanceolate fibulae should be dated into the period between the first half of the second century and the second half or the end of the first century BC, appearing along with the fibulae of the Late La Tène scheme (Kasparova 1981, 62 sqq.; ead. 1984, Ris.5; Packova 1988, 12 sqq.). The similarities or even direct analogies between certain finds of the type Zarubintsy and the ones from the Balkans, especially among the Scordisci, are beyond any doubt. This fact points to the close relations between these lands, since the fibulae of this type are not found in other areas. The fact should also be stated that the lanceolate fibulae of the Late La Tène scheme in the territory of the Zarubintsy culture are regularly found in the graves of the female deceased, as is the case with the pieces from the necropolis Gostilj–Vele Ledine (Abezgaŝ et al. 1992, 50 sqq.; Eremenko, Zuravlev 1992, 69 sqq.). The chronological correspondence of these shapes in the Balkans and in Eastern Europe, however, causes rightful doubt, since it is hard to presume that they appear synchronically in two remote areas of the continent.

Another kind of jewelry in focus of our attention here are the iron or bronze bracelets with widened middle part and two types of finials: A – open-ended, with flapped ornamented ends (fig. 3.1–9), and B – fastened by loops (fig. 3.10–12). Both variants are represented by several bracelets registered in the

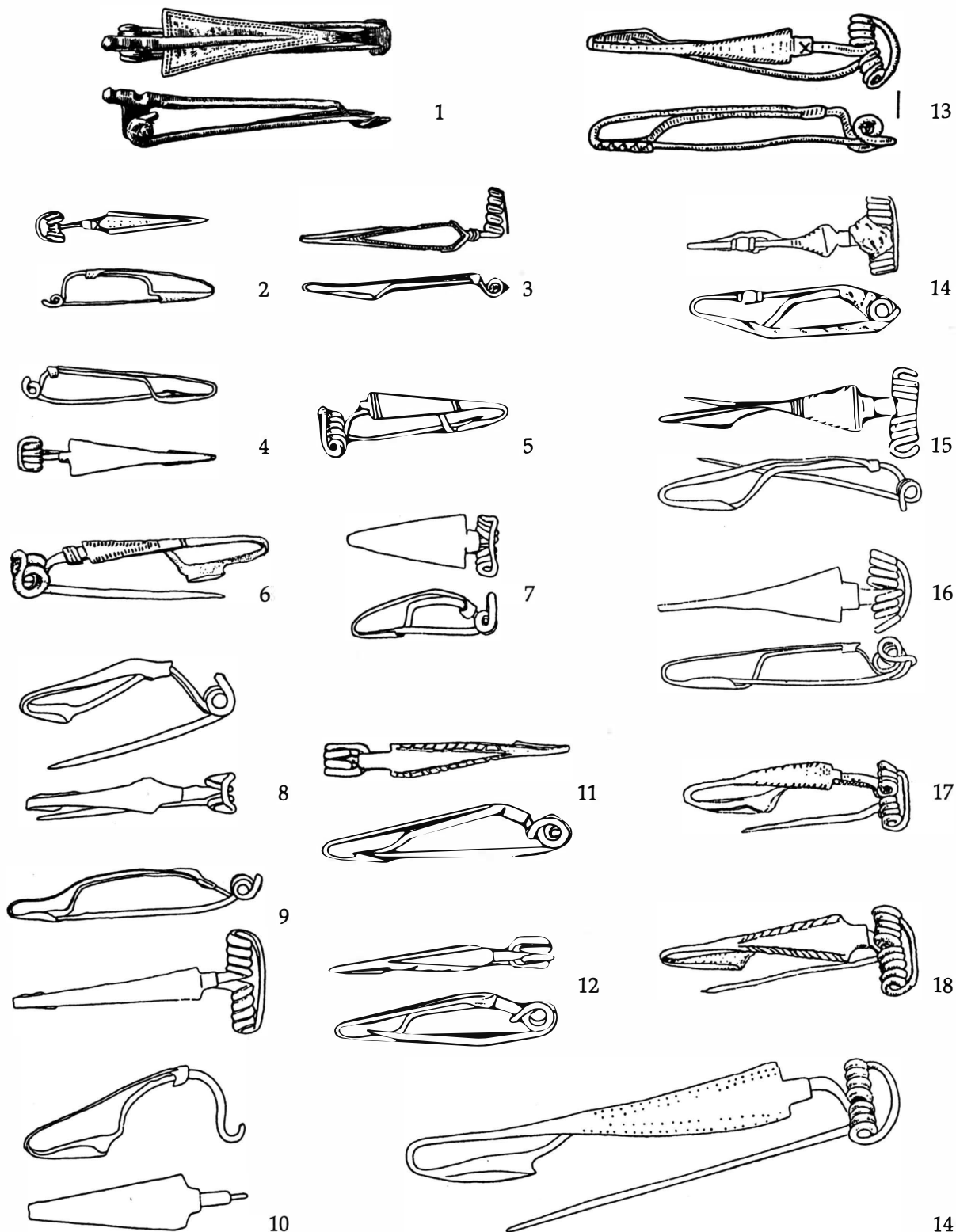


Fig. 2. 1. Gorica (Truhelka 1902); 2. Gostilj (Basler 1969); 3. Krajčinoči; 4–5. Mahreviči (Truhelka 1912); 6. Jezerine (Radimsky 1895), 7. Karaburma (Todorović 1972); 8–10 Ljubičevac–Ostrvo (Popović 1991); 11. Novi Banovci (Majnarić-Pandžić 1970); 12. Sremska Mitrovica–Livade (Brukner 1995); 13. Lukaševka II (Babeš 1993); 14–19. Type Zarubintsy (14–16, 19 Ambroz 1966; 17–18 Kasparova 1981); 2–3 silver, the rest bronze, scale 2:3

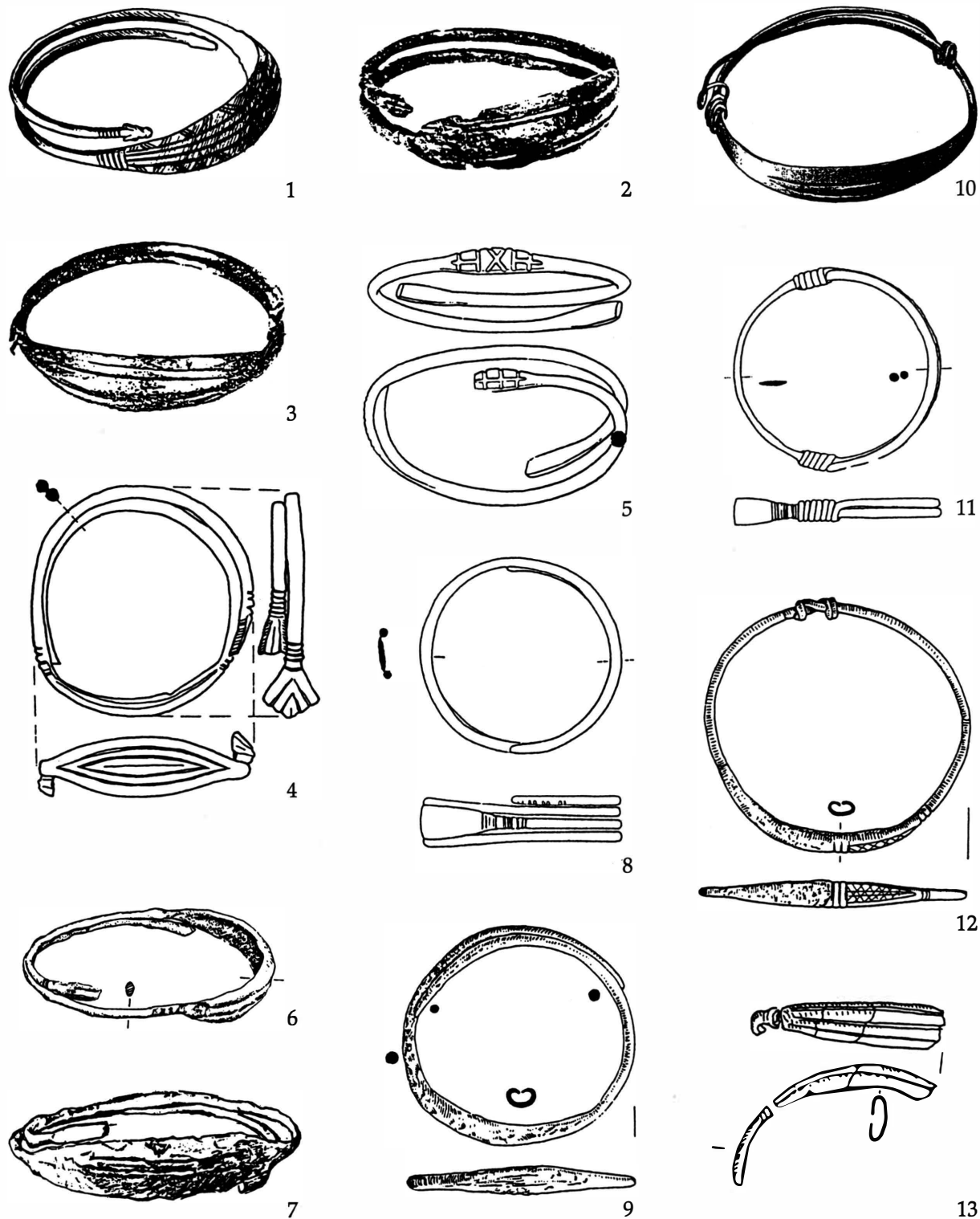


Fig 3. 1. Vir-Posušje (Marić 1962); 2. Sotin (Majnarić-Pandžić 1973); 3–4 Rospi-Čuprija (Todorović 1963, 1968); 5. Karaburma (Todorović 1972); 6–7. Mala Vrbica –Konopište; 8, 11. Dubravica (Vukmanović 1991); 9, 12. Borosesti (Babeş 1993); 10. Gorica (Truhelka 1902); 13. Dolinjany (Babeş 1993); 1, 8, 10, 11 bronze, the rest iron, scale 1:2

Adriatic hinterland, on the above mentioned sites of Gorica and Vir-Posušje (fig. 3.1,10). The hoard from Gorica is dated into the end of the second or the beginning of the first century BC, and the piece from Vir was determined by Z. Marić into the first half or the middle of the first century BC (Truhelka 1902, 45 sq., fig. 121; Marić 1962, 70 sq., T. 3.20). All the rest of bracelets of this type come from the Danube valley. In a warrior's grave in Sotin a very well preserved bracelet with flapped ends was found, dated into the last decades of the first century BC (fig. 3.2). An identical piece was found among the material from the devastated graves at the same site (Majnarić-Pandžić 1973, 69, T. 3.9; 5.5). At the necropolis Karaburma the repertoire of these shapes is much richer (Todorović 1972). In the grave 50, along with arms, a fragment of a bracelet was found, with zoomorphic finial, very similar to the piece from Sotin. In the grave 222, along with a sword and the other warrior equipment, a fragment of an iron bracelet with widened middle part and deep horizontal incisions was registered. Yet another warrior's grave (105) contained a fragmented bracelet (variant B), made of massive iron wire and widened in the middle part into a twisted foil. Only in the grave 14, along with female attire, an iron bracelet was found decorated with deep incisions (fig. 3.5). At the necropolis Rospi Ćuprija, separated from Karaburma merely by a stream, the bracelets are also found in men's graves (30, 31). The first one is well preserved, with an ellipsoid widened section in the middle and flapped fan-shaped finials (fig. 3.3,4). Another bracelet is fragmented but was most likely of the same shape (Todorović 1963). From the same necropolis originates a small bronze bracelet (variant B), with widened middle part, ornamented in vertical flutes (Todorović 1971, T. 71.5; 94.69).

The inventory from the cemeteries Karaburma – Rospi Ćuprija belongs to the Late La Tène period, broadly speaking – into the first century BC, tending towards dated somewhat later (Božić 1981, T.3). A fragment of a hollow bracelet from the Middle La Tène grave 29 from Karaburma most probably does not belong to the type discussed here (Todorović 1972, T. 11.29.1; cf. Babeş 1993, 106). From Dubravica, at the confluence of Morava and the Danube, several bracelets were registered, three of them belonging to the varieties of this type (Vukmanović 1991, T.2.1–3). In lack of other data, these are cited here merely as analogies (fig. 3.8,11).

During the salvage excavations in the area east of the Iron Gates, taking place in the eighties, a great number of new sites were registered, among them several La Tène cemeteries (Popović, Sladić 1997, 103 sqq.). For the present discussion relevant are the preliminary results of the excavations of the large

necropolis on the site Konopište by Mala Vrbica. Five La Tène graves have been investigated, four of them belonging to warriors. The iron bracelets, similar to the pieces from Dalj, Sotin or Rospi Ćuprija, were registered in three instances (fig. 3.6–7; for the find from Dalj, see Majnarić-Pandžić 1970, T. 3.9). The inventory of these graves is dated into the last decades of the first century (see Popović 1990, fig. 3. 12–13, id. 1992, Abb. 4.2). Further down the Danube valley, the bracelets of this type are registered as chance finds on the sites Ljubičevac–Ostrvo and Gruia (the find from Ljubičevac is not published and is kept in the National Museum in Belgrade; for the find from Gruia see Babeş 1988, 11, n. 34). The most recent find comes from a tumulus in northwestern Bulgaria, dated into the end of the second century or the first half of the first century (Trnava, mogila 1). It belongs to a horseman's grave, along with an iron bracelet with the widened middle part of twisted foil (Teodosijev, Torbov 1995, 44, Obr. 19).

Similar bracelets of iron or bronze are registered on the cemeteries between Dnestr and Siret, labeled as the type Poienesti–Lukasevka, after the name of the culture (Babeş 1993, 106). In this case, it is probably the result of taking over of some forms inspired by the bracelets worn by the inhabitants of the lands of the Scordisci along the Danube. The difference in the technique of manufacture is noticeable (the slightly widened middle section is made of bent foil, almost forming a hollow), many details are solved in a different manner (flapped ends are not emphasized, or shaped into small globular forms) and, finally, this is the jewelry from the graves of the female deceased (fig. 3.9,12–13). Interestingly enough, they are often relatively large (8 to 9 cm in diameter), so there is no significant difference in this respect between the male graves from the Danube valley, and the female ones between Dnestr and Siret, or the grave 14 from Karaburma (fig. 3). These bracelets mainly belong to the phase II of the culture Poienesti–Lukasevka, meaning the first half of the first century BC (Babeş 1993, 134 sqq.). Besides the cited examples from the Danube valley, there are no closer analogies. Only one more grave offering from Poland and two pieces from Switzerland may be mentioned (Mycielska, Wozniak 1988, T. 188/B2; Filip 1956, Obr. 45).

Finally, let us briefly mention the belt clasps of the type Laminci, mentioned quite often in the literature (Babeş 1983; Majnarić-Pandžić 1990; Sladić 1994; Rustoiu 1996, 120 sq., 202 sq.). The typology, chronology and frequency of these finds have been extensively treated by M. Babeş (1983), so only a short comment ensues. In the area around Sava and the Danube the fastening of a leather belt to an iron buckle coated with bronze foil was executed not only by hinge (fig. 4.2–6), as stated by Babeş; though

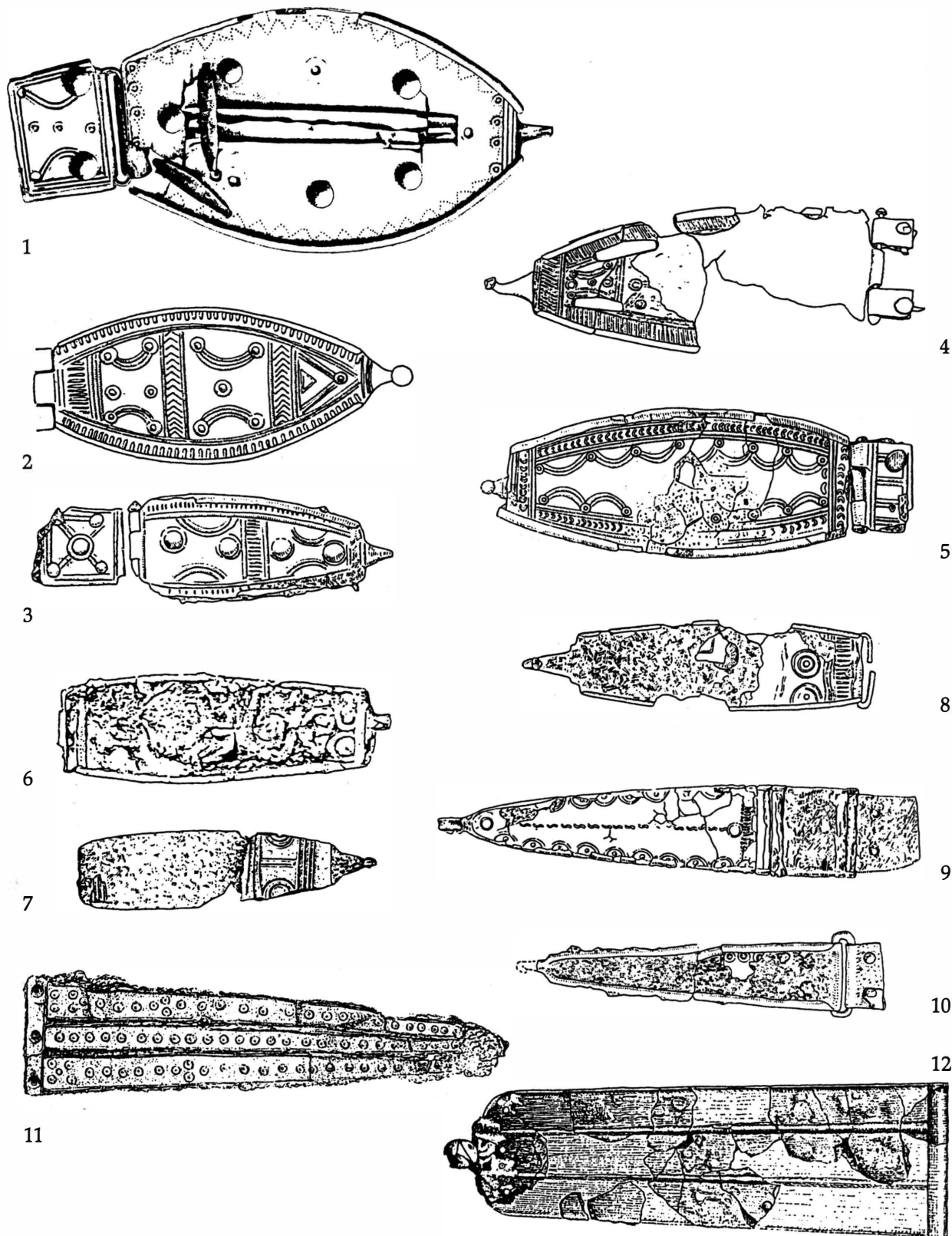


Fig. 4. 1. Sisak (Majnariž-Pandžić 1990); 2–3. Donji Laminci; 4. Karaburma; 5. Sighisoara; 6. Ajmana (Stalio 1986); 7. Šimian; 8. Altimir; 9–10. Borosesti (2–5, 7–10. Babeş 1983); 11–12 Type Holstein (Hingst 1962); 1 iron and silver, the rest iron and bronze, scale 1:3

rarely, an iron wire with a loop was used, characteristic for the Bastarnae (fig. 4.1.7–10; Majnarić-Pandžić 1990, 57 sqq., T.1–2; cf. Babeş 1983, 199 sqq., fig. 10). It seems as though from west to east, from the Scordisci to the Bastarnae, the difference is prominent in respect of the shape and size of these buckles, ranging from elongated oval, to oval rectangular and elongated triangular (fig. 4). The last shape, represented in the cemeteries of the culture Poienesti–Lukasevka, is associated to the finds of the belt buckles of the type Holstein in northern Europe (fig. 4.11–12; Babeş 1993, 99 sqq.). It seems obvious that the relations with the Germans influenced significantly the appearance of this kind of buckles. But, on the other hand, it is equally obvious that, without intense communication with the Scordisci and the intermediary role played by the Thracians and the Daco–Getians, the pieces worn by the Bastarnae would have looked utterly different. The buckles are dated into the first century BC, and in the territory of the Scordisci they mainly fall into the second half or the end of the century, or even later (Majnarić-Pandžić 1973, 69; ead. 1990; Stalio 1986, 35, fig. 49). The inventory of these graves by the rule belongs to the female deceased (Božić 1981, 322). An impression is strong that the belt buckles of the type Laminci were worn over a long time, since several pieces had been damaged and repaired.

The cited examples prove that the presence of the Bastarnae in the lands of the Dardanians left no trace and that the earliest analogous phenomena in the Balkans and Eastern Europe should be expected as late as the end of the second century BC. It is interesting to state that the connections between Eastern Europe and the lands of the Scordisci are dated as early as in the end of the third century or the first half of the second. These are documented by the intense concentration of the coins belonging to the type Husi–Vovriesti exactly in the area between Siret and Prut (Preda 1973, 111 sqq.). Further westwards the finds of these coins do not follow the Danube valley, but are registered on the fringes of the Carpathian mountains. These are ascribed to the Celto–Bastarnae, and an impression is really strong that a "Celtic connection" is at work, since the hoards

and chance finds of these coins are registered further in Transylvania and southwards, as far as the areas of the Scordisci. Namely, the silver coins of the type Husi–Vovriesti are registered in three hoards from Slavonia, Srem and Banat (Popović 1986, 79). The question of the attribution of these coins remains unsolved for now, since, according to some scholars, they originate from the somewhat earlier period, so consequently they precede the coming of the Bastarnae into these parts (Babeş 1993, 55).

The fibulae, bracelets and belt buckles from the Balkans, as demonstrated, influenced more or less profoundly the appearance of these shapes in some parts of Eastern Europe. All the mentioned types of jewelry belong to the La Tène, but not to the Celtic culture, since they originated from the autochthonous milieu, without direct analogies from the Celtic area. Without regard to their diverse origin, all these objects are present in the territory of the Scordisci as a part of the local costume. A special importance in the transfer of these forms towards east must be ascribed to the Lesser Scordisci, a fact testified by the obvious density of these finds in the area downstream of the Iron Gates (Popović 1991; id. 1994a, 19 sq.). Directly or indirectly, from the end of the second century or the beginning of the first, close contacts were established with the remote areas, such as the culture Zarubintsy. In the connections over this wide area an important role, along with the Daco–Getians, was played by the Bastarnae. As warriors, mercenaries or raiders, they performed affinity towards south and the more opulent areas. They must have crossed the Danube and visited the Balkans much more often than registered in the ancient sources. After the fall of Macedonia (168 BC), the Balkan barbarians saw the Romans as the most serious enemies and during the decades to come the Scordisci, the Thracians, the Dacians or the Bastarnae took part in the war campaigns (Papazoglu 1978). However, in the spread and acceptance of certain forms the possible joint operations were not of great importance, but much more their general cultural level and the indirect role of the La Tène culture, more or less influencing the design of the male and female costumes of various ethnic communities.

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