

IMPERIAL REPRESENTATION OR BARBARIC IMITATION? THE IMPERIAL BROOCHES (*KAISERFIBELN*)

Michael Schmauder

INTRODUCTION

The focus of the following observations are four brooches which have been preserved to this day and have been known to researchers for a long time as the *Kaiserfibeln*. The name given to these brooches is based on their similarity to *fibulae* of the late Roman and early Byzantine period as portrayed in historical records and shown in illustrations (Figg. 1 and 2).¹

Apart from the large ornamental fields decorated with precious stones, one of the characteristic features of the *Kaiserfibeln* is the pendants mounted on the base of the brooch. With regard to the emergence of pendant jewellery in his study on Frederick II's sovereign vestments Josef Deér commented in 1952: "The decisive innovation which dominated royal costume for centuries to come is also linked in this instance to the name of Constantine the Great. On both the armoured busts in the eastern and western side passages of the arch of Constantine (315) and on the gold solidus of the same year the new type of *Kaiserfibel* appears; its main feature are the two, three or more, strings of pearls, precious stones and golden pendants hanging from the actual brooch. Although there are numerous examples which provide evidence of their exceptional hanging arrangement

¹ The term *Kaiserfibel* was already used by Noll for *Zwiebelknopf* brooches bearing the imperial inscription: Noll, "Eine goldene *Kaiserfibel* aus Niederremmel vom Jahre 316"; Noll, "Zur goldenen *Kaiserfibel* aus Arezzo (ehemals Florenz). Ein Nachtrag zu Bonner Jahrbücher 174 (1974) 232"; Alföldi, "Die Niederremmeler *Kaiserfibel*: zum Datum des ersten Krieges zwischen Konstantin und Licinius"; nevertheless the term *Kaiserfibel* is used here since the items discussed are to be regarded as immediately related to the official imperial costume. Regarding official imperial costume: Belaeu, "Die Fibel in Byzanz"; Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, pp. 32–40; Deichmann, "Der spätantike Kaiserornat"; Delbrueck, *Spätantike Kaiserporträts*, pp. 53–66; Deér, *Der Kaiserornat Friedrichs II*, pp. 47–54; Wessel, "Fibel"; Alföldi, *Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreiche*; Kötzsche, "Die Gabe der Herzogin Mathilde", pp. 168–174; Bierbrauer, "Fibel" 741–47; Bastien, *La buste monétaire des empereurs romains* 2, pp. 406–415.

being used by the immediate successors of Constantine the Great right up until the end of the ninth century, the conspicuous lattice construction on the above-mentioned Constantine coin is in fact especially typical of the design. It remained unchanged as the main feature of the *Kaiserfibel* right into the eighth century.”²

To begin with the remaining examples will be considered archaeologically according to chronology and their place of origin, in the course of which technical peculiarities will be of particular significance. The results achieved form the basic pre-requisite for the cultural-historical evaluation of the brooches, for which purpose historical records in particular will be utilized, alongside the analysis of other types of objects.³

Kaiserfibeln were amongst the objects found at Szilágysomlyó II (today Șimleul Silvaniei [Romania])⁴ (Figg. 3, 1) and Petrossa (today Pietroasa [Romania])⁵ (Figg. 3, 2), the grave complex of Ostropataka (today Ostrovany [Slovakia])⁶ (Figg. 3, 3), and as a single object was found

² Deér, *Der Kaiserromat Friedrichs II*, p. 49. Deér's definition of the *Kaiserfibel* may initially appear too general, but it must be pointed out that a more precise delimitation of the brooch category, for instance based on its form, is not possible. The following examples represent the scope of variations of the brooch—Missorium of Theodosius: Arce, “El Missorium de Teodosio I: Precisiones y observaciones”; Medaillon of Justinian I: “Byzance”, pp. 167–169, nr. 113; Eugenius' gold medal (393–394 A.D.): Kent, Overbeck and Stylow, *Die Römische Münze*, p. 174, nr. 728, pl. 157; Honorius' solidus (395–423 A.D.): *ibid.*, p. 177, nr. 748, V, pl. 161; Clementius' Consular diptych (513 A.D.): Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, p. 35, nr. 15, pl. 7; Consular diptych in Halberstadt (beginning of fifth century A.D.): *ibid.*, p. 42, nr. 35, pl. 19.

³ I would like to thank Peter Bergmann and Gereon Siebigs for the translation and critical evaluation of the sources and Heinrich Härke for advice on English terminology.

⁴ Fettich, *A szilágysomlyói második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilágy Somlyó*, pp. 21–23 and pp. 59–62, pl. 8, 8; 9, 1a; 10, 1; Kiss, “Zeitpunkt der Verbergung der Schatzfunde I und II von Szilágysomlyó”; Harhoiu, “Chronologische Fragen der Völkerwanderungszeit in Rumänien”, pp. 189–199; Kiss, “Die Schatzfunde I und II von Szilágysomlyó als Quellen der gepidischen Geschichte”; Garam and Kiss, *Népvándorlás kori aranykincsek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban*, pp. 30–37, cat. no. 15–25.

⁵ Odobescu, *Le Trésor de Pétroussa*, pp. 85–89; Dunareanu-Vulpe, *Der Schatz von Petroasa*; Harhoiu, *The Treasure from Petroasa*; Tomescu, *Der Schatzfund von Petroasa*, pp. 230–235, nr. 98. In particular with regard to the brooches: Fettich, “Zu den Fibeln von Petroasa und Békésszentandrás”; Brown, “The brooches in the Petroasa treasure”.

⁶ Hampel, *Der Goldfund von Nagy-Szent-Miklós*, p. 153, fig. 67; Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, p. 344, tab. 2; Beninger, “Der Germanenfund von Czéke-Cejkov”, p. 224; Beninger, *Die germanischen Bodensfunde in der Slowakei*, pp. 148–153; Fettich, *A szilágysomlyói második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilágy Somlyó*, p. 61, note 3; Raddatz, “Eine Fibel aus Zugmantel”, p. 56, note 27; Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, p. 66, cat. F 3, fig. 44; Werner, “Der goldene Armring des Frankenkönigs Childerich und die germanischen Handgelenkringe der jüngeren Kaiserzeit”, p. 18.

at Rebrin (Figg. 3, 4)—generally known under the name of the town it was brought to, Nagymihály (today Michalovce [Slovakia]).⁷

1. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE: CHRONOLOGY AND ORIGIN

A. Ostrovany grave 1 (Figg. 4 and 5)⁸

In its basic form the brooch from grave 1 at Ostrovany is similar to the disc brooches of the imperial *Dienstkostüm* of the late imperial and late Roman period.

J. Werner most recently pointed out the outstanding significance of the object found in the grave at Ostrovany and wrote:

Dieser bei weitem reichste und bedeutendste germanische Grabfund aus der jüngeren Kaiserzeit . . . steht im Range des Childerichgrabes und verdient trotz seines fragmentarischen Zustandes eine moderne Bearbeitung.

This object, by far the most splendid and important find in a Germanic grave of the late imperial era is just as important as Childerich's grave and, despite its fragmentary condition, merits a modern study.⁹

Contrary to the opinion of R. Noll, who ventured to date the object to the late fourth century,¹⁰ and in agreement with K. Raddatz,¹¹ Werner maintained that the object found in the grave originated from the third century. Recently E. Kreković examined the question of dating the whole complex.¹² In his opinion, which he does not, however, justify in detail, grave 1 at Ostrovany is to be dated to the end of the third century A.D.¹³

⁷ Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, p. 345, pl. 4; Beninger, *Die germanischen Bodenfunde in der Slowakei*, pp. 56–57; Fettich, *A szilágyosmlyői második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilágy Somlyó*, pp. 58–59, note 1; Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, p. 48, cat. no. C 3, fig. 35.

⁸ Overall length: 14,7 cm.; brooch: 6,7 cm.; width: 5,6 cm.; onyx length: 4,75 cm.; onyx width: 40 cm.; height: 2,3 cm.; weight: 83,7 g. (after Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*), 71,8 g. (after Werner, "Der goldene Armring des Frankenkönigs Childerich und die germanischen Handgelenkringe der jüngeren Kaiserzeit", p. 18); inv. nr.: Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien VII B 306.

⁹ Werner, "Der goldene Armring des Frankenkönigs Childerich und die germanischen Handgelenkringe der jüngeren Kaiserzeit", p. 18.

¹⁰ Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, p. 66, cat. F 3, fig. 4.

¹¹ Raddatz, "Eine Fibel aus Zugmantel", pp. 53–58, here p. 56, note 7.

¹² Kreković, "Zur Datierung der Fürstengräber der römischer Kaiserzeit in der Slowakei", p. 57.

¹³ Further dating proposals: Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, p. 344 (first half of the third century A.D.); Fettich, *A szilágyosmlyői második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von*

In the past the brooch was generally assumed to be of Roman provenance.¹⁴ Noll regards the origins of the brooch as not definitely resolved.¹⁵ However, the dolphin-shaped connecting pieces between the stone mounting of the upper side and the frame of the underside cannot be interpreted as Germanic artwork (Fig. 6). Apart from this, the *opus interrasile* ornamentation on the onyx frame¹⁶ and the gold plating of the reverse side with pressed central umbos and floral palmed decoration can be regarded as a typical late Roman-early Byzantine ornamental technique; it can also be found in the breast-plates of Olbia¹⁷ and Cluj-Someşeni¹⁸ (Figg. 7 and 8).

B. *The brooch from Szilágysomlyó II (Figg. 9 and 10)*¹⁹

The characteristic elements of the brooch from Szilágysomlyó II are the curved base, the large central field with the large slightly arched, central onyx and the rounded terminals of the head of the brooch.

Despite all efforts undertaken in the field of archaeological research over the last few years, a more detailed dating of the brooch cannot be made due to the lack of comparable objects. Nevertheless, the beginning of the collection of the treasure, the period between 360 and 370 A.D., can be taken as a terminus post quem for its fabrication, even though one cannot rule out an earlier origin—as far back as to the second quarter of the fourth century. However, the object very possibly belongs to the beginning of the fifth century, since within the hoard, which is believed to have been concealed in the middle

Szilágysomlyó, p. 61 (around 300 A.D.). This question can probably only be settled by the complete new assessment of the find which Werner has called for.

¹⁴ Roman: Riegl, *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie*, p. 344; Fettich, *A szilágysomlyói második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilágysomlyó*, p. 61; see also: Wessel, "Fibel", pp. 544–545.

¹⁵ Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, p. 66; Bastien, *Le buste monétaire des empereurs romains* 2, p. 409; *Schätze des Österreichischen Kaiserhauses*, pp. 140–141, fig. 179.

¹⁶ Riegl, *Spättrömische Kunstindustrie*, pp. 266–291; Buckton, "The beauty of holiness: *opus interrasile* from a late antique workshop".

¹⁷ Rupp, *Die Herkunft der Zelleinlage und die Almandinscheibenfibeln im Rheinland*, pp. 49–54 and p. 63; Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* 2, no. 166, 117–119, pl. 81 D; Bierbrauer, *Die ostgotischen Grab- und Schatzfunde in Italien*, p. 168 with note 248.

¹⁸ Horedt and Protase, "Ein völkerwanderungszeitlicher Schatzfund aus Cluj-Someşeni (Siebenbürgen)", p. 92, note 18.

¹⁹ Unfortunately the brooch was not available for inspection despite several inquiries and visits to the Hungarian National Museum. Length: 17,1 cm.; width: 11,4 cm.; onyx: 8,6 × 6,9 cm.; frame of the onyx: 9,6 × 8,1 cm.; weight: 455,8 g.; inv. nr.: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum 122, 1895, 1.

of the fifth century (the youngest objects can be dated in this period), it is one of the least worn examples. This could, however, be due to the unusual design of the object.

With the aid of the onyx brooch from the second find at Szilágysomlyó it is easy to understand the contradictory classification concerning the origin of the preserved *Kaiserfibeln*.

N. Fettich, who presented the archaeological find in a monograph with detailed technical observations in 1932:

... glatte Goldplättchen unter den farbigen Einlagen, geriefelter Golddraht rund um die Zellen, Verzierung der hohen Zellwände, Vorkommen des kannelierten Goldbandes an der Onyxfibel und am Gürtelschmuck des 1. Schatzes ...

... flat gold discs under the coloured inserts, grooved gold wire around the cells, decoration of the high cell walls of the fluted gold band on the onyx brooch and on the belt fittings of the first treasure find ...²⁰

—which relate the brooch with the other certainly non-Roman pieces of the treasure, comes to the conclusion that it must be a barbaric imitation of the late Roman *Kaiserfibel*.²¹

B. Arrhenius in her work on Merovingian garnet jewellery argued that the brooch originated in the Pannonian region and believed that the emperor himself had commissioned the object.²² In her investigations of the crossbow and round bow brooches of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., from the areas west of the Rhine and south of the Danube, M. Schulze-Dörrlamm commented on the brooches from Szilágysomlyó and Pietroasa:

Daß es sich dabei tatsächlich um Fibeln handelt, die von römischen Goldschmieden hergestellt worden sind, beweisen u.a. die Scharnierkonstruktion und die teilweise verdeckten, leicht facettierten Zwiebellknöpfe, die auch an den zwei kleinen Vogelfibeln aus Pietroasa zu finden sind.

Proof that they really were brooches made by Roman goldsmiths is to be found, among other things, in the hinge construction and the partly hidden lightly faceted rounded terminals which are also to be found on the two bird brooches from Pietroasa.²³

²⁰ Fettich, *A szilágysomlyói második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilagy Somlyó*, p. 59. A. Riegl and N. Belaev had already proposed that it originated from the late Roman era (Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, p. 344; Belaev, "Die Fibel in Byzanz", p. 107).

²¹ Now see as a parallel to the decoration of the cell mountings: Feugère, "Apollon et Daphné sur une bouchle de ceinturon tardo-romaine en argent doré", figs. 3–5 and coloured plate.

²² Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery*, p. 197. See also: Arrhenius, "Almandin und Almandinverzierung", p. 176.

²³ Schulze-Dörrlamm, "Romanisch oder Germanisch? Untersuchungen zu den

In 1986 in his essay on East Germanic elite graves from the period of the Roman Empire and the early Middle Ages V. Bierbrauer examined the question of the origin of the onyx brooch and the object he called the "round" brooch from the find at Pietroasa and maintained:

So sehr beide Rund-Fibeln auf der Schauseite, also in Form, in der Verwendung kostbarer Steine und mit ihren Pendilien auch den Kaiserfibeln entsprechen, so klar belegt die Rückseite, daß die beiden Fibeln im Barbarikum von barbarischen Goldschmieden gefertigt wurden: Dies beweist der Befestigungsapparat, der zwar ebenfalls wie an römischen Fibeln Zwiebelknöpfe aufweist bzw. imitiert; sie sind aber aufgelötet und nicht verschraubt, womit das komplizierte An- und Ablegen entfiel.

Despite the fact that the form of the front side of both "round" brooches—with precious stones and pendants—are very similar to the *Kaiserfibeln*, the reverse sides clearly prove that both brooches are made in the *barbaricum* by barbarian goldsmiths: this is proved by the fastening mechanism which, although it has rounded terminals reminiscent of Roman brooches or imitating them, is soldered and not screwed on—thus avoiding complicated putting on and taking off.²⁴

Above all because of the unique design of the object and the use of numerous elements found on Roman brooches, I. Bóna came to the following conclusion:

Der Form nach geht die Fibel auf die spätrömischen, im 4. Jahrhundert üblichen Zwiebelknopffibeln zurück. Die eigentümlich rohrförmigen Fassungen der Karneol- und Bergkristalleinlagen sind von antiken Goldgeflecht überzogen. Auch der Nadelhalter ist eine charakteristisch römische Arbeit. Der 8,6 × 6,9 cm. große, ovale Onyx in der Mitte ist ein so kunstvoll geschliffener Edelstein, wie ihn zur damaligen Zeit keine einzige barbarische Werkstatt hätte herstellen können. . . . Aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach ist sie ein Erzeugnis der kaiserlichen Goldschmiedewerkstatt in Konstantinopel.

The form would suggest that the design of the brooch is based on the type of crossbow brooch typical of the late Roman era in the fourth century. The actual cylindrical frame of the carnelian and rock crystal inlays are covered with antique gold latticework. The pin clasp is also characteristic Roman work. The 8.6 × 6.9 cm. large, oval onyx in the middle is such a skillfully ground precious stone, that no barbarian workshop at that time could have produced it. . . . In all probability it is a product of the imperial goldsmith workshop in Constantinople.²⁵

Armbrust- und Bügelknopffibeln des 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. aus den Gebieten westlich des Rheins und südlich der Donau", p. 678.

²⁴ Bierbrauer, "Ostgermanische Oberschichtgräber der römischen Kaiserzeit und des frühen Mittelalters", pp. 78–79.

²⁵ Bóna, *Das Hunnenreich*, p. 267.

M. Martin recently described this brooch as an *Oströmische Mantelfibel* (Eastern Roman coat-brooch), without, however, defining this term more precisely.²⁶

The above-mentioned observations on the brooch from Szilágy-somlyó II show that the definition of the origin of the brooch is still disputed. Only technological aspects based on the fastening mechanism of the brooches can help to explain this since the validity of an evaluation like Bóna's—that such a “skillfully round precious stone” could not have been produced by any barbarian workshop—is largely beyond us due to the small number of such objects which have been preserved and to our incomplete idea of the potential of barbarian workshops or workshops under barbarian control, in particular in the Pontic region.

With regard to the fastening mechanism (which is shown below to be decisive for determining the plan of origin) the views of Schulze-Dörrlamm and Bierbrauer differ even more. While the fastening mechanism, in particular, together with rounded terminals makes Schulze-Dörrlamm conclude that the object is of Roman origin, Bierbrauer regards the simple design of the fastening mechanism without the screwthread, which is usual for crossbow brooches of type 6 and the following type 7, as a sign that they were made in *barbaricum*. Certain points of both views have to be corrected. Bierbrauer's assumption that the onyx brooch from the second treasure from Szilágysomlyó and the “small” “round” brooch (as well as the “middle” = “Ibis” pair of brooches) cannot be Roman because of the lack of screwthreads, is based on Keller's attempts to date crossbow brooches of types 5 and 6.²⁷ However, in 1988 M.P. Pröttel showed that the production period of type 5 of the crossbow brooch has to be considerably extended—right up to the early fifth century A.D. This means that because of the above-mentioned chronological assessment of the object—i.e. presumably at the beginning of the fifth century—the fastening mechanism of the brooch from Szilágy Somlyó does not necessarily have to have a screwthread, since this first appears or can appear on crossbow brooches of type 6 and is only an exclusive feature of brooches of type 7.²⁸ To this extent one must agree with

²⁶ Martin, “Zur frühmittelalterlichen Gürteltracht der Frau in der Burgundia, Francia und Aquitania”, p. 65, note 77.

²⁷ Keller, *Die spätromischen Grabfunde in Südbayern*.

²⁸ Pröttel, “Zur Chronologie der Zwiebelknopffibeln”, pp. 364–369.

Schulze-Dörlamm's assessment of the brooch from Szilágysomlyó II—i.e. that it is a late Roman-early Byzantine work which features the fastening mechanism typical of crossbow brooches. Particularly with regard to the brooch from Pietroasa the astonishing difference between the fastening mechanisms of the two brooches becomes obvious.

*C. Pietroasa (Figg. 11 and 12)*²⁹

Among the objects found at Pietroasa there are two—the "small" brooch and the so-called eagle brooch—which have to be examined more closely within the framework of the problem dealt with here.

According to Harhoiu, the dating of the "small" brooch should be made on the basis of the rounded terminals which are hollow and faceted and typical of the crossbow brooches of type 6.³⁰ M.P. Pröttel's findings also suggest that the crossbow brooches should be dated to the period around 400 A.D., or the beginning of the fifth century—as suggested by E. Keller.³¹ The dating of the "small" brooch and also the Eagle brooch from Pietroasa, however, are based mainly on comparison with the decoration of other pieces found in the whole of the find, which make a date in the second quarter of the fifth century probable.

As regards the origin of the brooch from Pietroasa the latest research also shows a marked contrast between the opinions of Bierbrauer and Schulze-Dörlamm. Unlike the case of the brooch from Szilágysomlyó, however Schulze-Dörlamm's observation that the hinged construction of the brooch indicates that it is a Roman artifact proves to be incorrect.³² In contrast to the Roman type of construction, where the needle axis is always situated in the lateral append-

²⁹ Length: 12,0 cm.; width: 7,6 cm.; weight: 204,0 g.; inv. nr.: Muzeul National de Istorie a României, Bucuresti 11434.

³⁰ Keller, *Die spätromischen Grabfunde in Südbayern*, p. 52: *Facettierte Knöpfe, die an Zwiebelknopffibeln vom Typ 5 zu den Ausnahmen gehören (fünf von 44 Exemplaren, vgl. Liste 10, 217 f.), sind die Regel (14 von 17 Exemplaren, vgl. Liste 11, 219).*

³¹ Harhoiu, "Chronologische Fragen der Völkerwanderungszeit in Rumänien", pp. 169–208.

³² Schulze-Dörlamm, "Romanisch oder Germanisch? Untersuchungen zu den Armbrust- und Bügelknopffibeln des 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. aus den Gebieten westlich des Rheins und südlich der Donau", p. 679. D. Brown evaluates the fastening mechanism of the brooches in a similar way: "The oval body of the bird is like the large oval jewels in the centre of the imperial brooches, the chains of the pendants interlink in exactly the same way as those on the misorium of Theodosius, and the pin, though sprung in Germanic fashion, is mounted on a fitting just like that on a Roman brooch" (Brown, "The brooches in the Pietroasa treasure", p. 115).

age, which is joined to the rounded terminals — as already maintained by Bierbrauer³³ — the entire locking mechanism of the brooch from Pietroasa is soldered onto the lateral appendage (Fig. 13). Hence, this is an optical but not a technical imitation of the Roman fastening system. One cannot conclude whether this was because of ignorance, due to the lack of technical skill or due to the fact that reproduction of lateral appendages so characteristic of the Roman rounded terminals was regarded as more important than its technical aspects.³⁴ This latter explanation seems most likely. Certainly, however, these technical details indicate that the brooch from Pietroasa comes from a barbarian workshop.³⁵

At this juncture it should be pointed out that there was probably a matching brooch and that it should therefore be regarded as part of a woman's traditional costume³⁶ as in the case of the so-called "Ibis Pair of Brooches". Nevertheless, this detail does not basically alter the fact that the brooch should be regarded as a copy of a brooch from traditional imperial costume.³⁷

D. Rebrin (Figs. 14 and 15)³⁸

The find from Rebrin must also be classified as a *Kaiserfibel*. R. Noll, who recently attempted a dating, estimated that it dates to the second

³³ V. Bierbrauer pointed this out in a seminar in 1988 on the Migration Period in south-east Europe.

³⁴ On the use of technical solutions customary in the mediterranean region in the *barbaricum* see: Arrhenius, "Die Schraube als Statussymbol. Zum Technologietransfer zwischen Römer und Germanen"; Stoll, "Der Transfer von Technologie in der römische Antike. Einige zusätzliche Bemerkungen zu einem Buch von Sigrid Dufek".

³⁵ The following archaeologists assume that the brooch is a barbarian work of art: Odobescu, *Le Trésor de Pétrossa*, p. 87; Dunareanu-Vulpe, *Der Schatz von Pietroasa*, p. 37; Harhoiu, *The Treasure from Pietroasa*, p. 18.

³⁶ Odobescu, *Le Trésor de Pétrossa*, pp. 18–9: *Une fibule ou coquille plus petite (que les fibules VIII et IX antérieurement décrites), grosse comme une moitié de coquille d'œuf de poule, ronde comme un boulet, en forme d'oiseau sans bec, mais ayant un cou plus droit et plus mince que celui des deux précédents, recouverte aussi de pierres menues comme la graine de lin. Cette pièce était désignée par les paysans comme la pareille de la petite fibule X.* If one would assume a brooch pair chains would be most common like in the case of the *Ibis*-brooch pair. With regard to this see: Bierbrauer, "Zwei romanische Bügelfibeltypen des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts im mittleren Alpenraum. Ein Beitrag zur Kontinuitäts- und Siedlungsgeschichte", p. 50.

³⁷ Empresses with *Kaiserfibeln*, e.g.: Vollbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, p. 50, no. 52, pl. 27; Kent, Overbeck and Stylow, *Die römische Münze*, p. 175, no. 734 V, pl. 159; p. 173, no. 720 V, pl. XXVI; p. 178, no. 754 V, pl. XXVI.

³⁸ Overall length: 19,5 cm.; length of the brooch: 8,0 cm.; width: 7,0 cm.; weight: 160,1 g.; inv. nr.: Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien VIIb 307.

half of the fourth century.³⁹ However, different ornamental elements of the brooch suggest that it belongs to the decades of the middle of the fifth century.⁴⁰ Firstly one could cite the long right-angled garnets, known as "staff cells", whose cross-sections form a half-circle, which enclose the ornamental surfaces. However, such forms of stone inlays are primarily found in works from the second and third quarters of the fifth century but can be proved to have already existed in the second half of the fourth century. Individual examples also appear again in a slightly altered form around 600 A.D. and in the early seventh century.⁴¹ Apart from the "staff cell" garnets with smooth surfaces, ones with lateral grooves can be found, which both in their function and their chronological position form a uniform group with the first category. In addition the juxtaposition of garnet inserts in the bridgework and enclosed stones in cabochon technique provide an important clue for dating purposes. Works in cabochon technique are characteristic of the time around the first half and the middle of the fifth century.⁴² Amongst the numerous comparisons, the middle pair of brooches from Pietroasa, with the arrangement of stones on their base and on the upper border of the headpiece, represents an obvious parallel to the brooch from Rebrin. The axe-shaped plane garnet inlay of the almost triangular ornamental field are reminiscent of a belt buckle from grave 2 in Bona in Algeria, for which Bierbrauer postulates a dating in the Ostrogothic period.⁴³ Due to the dating of the different ornamental elements it appears most likely that the brooch from Rebrin can be placed in the fifth century and presumably in the decades around the middle of that century.

Previous research suggested that the brooch from Rebrin was of

³⁹ Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, p. 48, cat. C 3, pl. 35. Further early datings: Fettich, *A szilágyosmelyői második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilágy Somlyó*, p. 59 (third quarter of the fourth century A.D.); Wessel, "Fibel", p. 545 (second half of the fourth century A.D.). See also: *Schätze des Österreichischen Kaiserhauses*, pp. 133–134, cat. no. 203, fig. 170.

⁴⁰ M.W. Conway proposes a date in the fifth century A.D. (Conway, "The abbey of Saint-Denis and its ancient treasure", p. 123, pl. 7, 2). See also: Vierck, "Werke des Eligius", p. 349. Belaev proposes a date in the fifth or even possibly the sixth century: Belaev, "Die Fibel in Byzanz", p. 108 (German summary).

⁴¹ On the late occurrence see: Vierck, "Werke des Eligius", p. 350.

⁴² See also the brooch from Fano: Bierbrauer, *Die ostgotischen Grab- und Schatzfunde in Italien*, p. 15 and pp. 340–341, pl. 59, 1–2a; Bierbrauer, "Historische Überlieferung und archäologischer Befund. Ostgermanische Einwanderer unter Odoaker und Theoderich nach Italien", pp. 272–5, pl. 10, 1–3.

⁴³ Bierbrauer, *Die ostgotischen Grab- und Schatzfunde in Italien*, p. 157, note 217, pl. 81, 2.

barbarian origin.⁴⁴ However, the only detailed considerations regarding this piece are by Fettich in his work on the second find from Szilágysomlyó II.⁴⁵ In principle Fettich's dating of the piece in the third quarter of the fourth century A.D. is to be rejected, and hence also his presumption that it originated in a workshop at the same time as the older find from Szilágysomlyó. Fettich's objections to the possibility of a late Roman-early Byzantine work prove to be just as unspecific here as in the case of the onyx brooch from Szilágysomlyó II. In particular his discussion of the fastening mechanism of the brooch is not accurate. It is correct that a pin is used for fastening the needle, as elsewhere—as can be observed on the pair of lion brooches from Szilágysomlyó II. However, in contrast to the latter, the brooch from Rebrin also has a sort of safety clasp which is pushed via the needle from the narrow end into the needle holder. The clasp and not the needle is secured by the pin (Fig. 16). The complicated construction of the fastening system is reminiscent of types 6 and 7 of the cross-bow brooch. Fastening mechanisms, with a pin through the clasp holding the needle, are commonly found on provincial Roman brooches.⁴⁶ Apart from this, it must be pointed out that the needle holder, which is constructed as a simple hollow lateral appendage, is not an imitation of a late Roman crossbow brooch lateral appendage but is, rather, an ornamentation of an axle end commonly found on Roman jewellery, which is for instance found frequently on hinged bracelets.⁴⁷ Not least the plastic and plant-like arrangement of the leaf ornamentation on the brooch base and underside of the head make it extremely implausible that it originated in a Germanic workshop in south-eastern Europe.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Germanic copy: Fettich, *A szilágysomlyói második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilágysomlyó*, p. 59; Noll, *Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, p. 48; Wessel, "Fibel", p. 545. Byzantine: Vierck, "Werke des Eligius", p. 349 with note 179.

⁴⁵ Fettich, *A szilágysomlyói második kincs—Der zweite Schatz von Szilágysomlyó*, p. 59 note 1.

⁴⁶ See for example: Belaev, "Die Fibel in Byzanz", p. 84 note 240, fig. 21; Saria, "Fibeln mit Sperrvorrichtungen"; Patek, "Biztosítószervezettel készített fibulák pannóniából (Fibules Pannoniennes muni d'un appareil de sûreté)"; Behrens, "Zur Typologie und Technik der provinzialrömischen Fibeln", pp. 233–234; Hattatt, *Iron Age and Roman Brooches*, pp. 195–196, figg. 79–80.

⁴⁷ Greifenhagen, *Schmuckarbeiten in Edelmetall*, pp. 325–326, no. 2787, pl. 63 and p. 329, no. 2812, pl. 64; Lepage, "Les bracelets de luxe romains et byzantins du II au VI siècle. Étude de la forme et de structure".

⁴⁸ See, for instance, the similar arrangements of leaf ornamentations on the underside of the bowls of silver spoons (Hauser, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Silberlöffel*, cat. no. 119, pl. 18d and no. 110, pl. 29c) or leaf ornamentations within the stone

2. CULTURAL-HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The archaeological investigations of the surviving *Kaiserfibeln* have shown that the artifacts from Pietroasa demonstrably originated outside the late Roman-early Byzantine Empire, whereas it may be assumed with equal certainty that the brooch from Ostrovany grave I was produced in a late Roman workshop. In the case of the treasure from Szilágysomlyó II and that from Rebrin important objections to the possibility of a late Roman origin can be dispelled, which consequently makes it probable that both pieces originate from within the boundaries of the Empire.

The following is intended to establish an overall cultural-historical relationship on the basis of the results obtained from the archaeological material. Here special significance is attached to the historical sources. The focus of this cultural-historical evaluation is the question of the conferment of such brooches on barbarian rulers, and the possibility of an imitation of the use of *Kaiserfibeln* in barbarian regions.

The bestowal of so-called *Kaiserfibeln* on barbarian rulers is confirmed in reports by Agathias and Procopius. Agathias gives a detailed account of the bestowal of royal investiture on Zathis, King of the Lazi, by Justin I in the year 522 A.D. He writes:

Meanwhile Tzathes had arrived from Constantinople accompanied by the general Soterichus. He had received his ancestral title together with the royal insignia from the hand of the emperor in accordance with time-honoured tradition. The insignia consist of a gold-crown set with precious stones, a robe of cloth of gold extending to the feet, scarlet shoes and a turban similarly embroidered with gold and precious stones. It is not lawful, however, for the kings of the Lazi to wear a purple cloak, only a white one being permitted. Nevertheless is it not an altogether ordinary garment since it is distinguished by having a brilliant stripe of gold fabric woven across the middle of it. Another feature of the royal insignia is the clasp, resplendent with jewelled pendants and other kinds of ornament, with which the cloak is fastened.⁴⁹

There is a very similar description by Procopius of the brooches which were bestowed upon the five satraps of Armenia by Justinian I:

... Such was the disposition he made for Greater Armenia, which extends inside the Euphrates River as far as the city of Amida; five

sculpture: Effenberger and Severin, *Das Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst in Berlin*, pp. 78-79, no. 8.

⁴⁹ Agathias, *Hist.* 3, 15, 2, ed. Frendo, pp. 84-5.

Armenian satraps held power, and these offices were always hereditary and held for life. However, they received the symbols of office only from the Roman emperor. It is worth while describing these insignia, for they will never again be seen by man. There is a cloak made of wool, not such as is produced by sheep, but gathered from the sea. The creature on which this wool grows is called *Pinnos*. The section of the purple cloth, where normally the cloth is inserted, is overlaid with gold. The cloak was fastened by a golden brooch, in the middle of which was a precious stone from which hung three sapphires held by loose golden chains. There was a tunic of silk adorned in every part with decorations of gold which they are wont to call *plumia*. The boots were of the red colour which the Roman emperor and the Persian king are permitted to wear.⁵⁰

A comparison of the artifacts described above with preserved examples, with brooches named in other reports and those displayed in illustrations, show that both Zathis, king of the Lazi, and the five satraps of Armenia were actually presented with brooches which correspond with the known *Kaiserfibeln*. The appearance of such brooches in the areas north of the borders of the Roman Empire should therefore not really be regarded as surprising.⁵¹ Since other possibilities of receiving this brooch—purchase or theft can be ruled out—are not conceivable, the artifacts from Ostrovany grave 1, Szilágyosomlyó II and Rebrin represent the bestowal upon barbarian rulers of insignia, which were certainly very similar to the imperial costume, if not in all elements and design.

The small brooch and the eagle brooch from Pietroasa have to be evaluated in a very different way. Since they were certainly manufactured in a barbarian workshop, the brooches can only be regarded as imitations of the *Kaiserfibeln*. The considerable presumptuousness which is expressed in the imitation of a *Kaiserfibel* appears implausible at first glance and demands examination in the written record.

The example of Theoderic the Great and his rule in the Ostrogothic kingdom of Italy provides a basis for examining this phenomenon.

⁵⁰ Procopius, *De aedificiis* 3, 1, 17–23, eds. Page *et al.*, pp. 183 and 185.

⁵¹ With regard to this see N. Belaev (Belaev, "Die Fibel in Byzanz", p. 109). Since the Roman Republic the bestowal of insignia on barbarian rulers was a standard element of Roman foreign policy. See for example: Heuß, *Die völkerrechtlichen Grundlagen der römischen Außenpolitik in republikanischer Zeit*, pp. 29–30; Sickel, "Das byzantinische Krönungsrecht bis zum 10. Jahrhundert", pp. 514–557 with note 32. See also: Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King. The Character of the Client Kingship*; Braund, "Ideology, subsidies and trade: The king on the northern frontier revisited"; Lordkipanidse and Brakmann, "Iberia", p. 34.

Theoderic's medallion from Morro d'Alba shall serve as an archaeological starting point (fig. 17).⁵² The entire composition of the portrait is modelled on images on imperial coins and—with the depiction of Theoderic in armour with *paludamentum*, the Victoria on the globe and the gesture of allocution—it copies elements of imperial iconography. A description by Agnellus of a mosaic next to the palace door in Ravenna suggests that Theoderic had himself portrayed in imperial-style robes on other monuments. Agnellus describes how a picture of Theoderic mounted on a horse shows him wearing armour and armed with a shield and spear, accompanied by the personification of Roma and Ravenna.⁵³ Within the framework of these considerations the account by Anonymus Valesianus is also interesting. He reports that the "ornamenta palatii" were sent to Theoderic by Anastasius in the year 497 A.D.⁵⁴ Archaeologists today agree that this term must have meant a royal, not an imperial robe. Nevertheless Theoderic wore both the diadem and the purple, which must at least be regarded as exceptional. Hence, D. Claude comes to the conclusion:

Er (gemeint ist das Ornat Theoderichs) scheint der kaiserlichen Gewandung geähnelt zu haben.

It [i.e. Theoderic's robe] appears to have resembled the imperial robe.⁵⁵

H. Wolfram takes the same attitude to Theoderic's public representation when he writes:

The emperor's prerogatives, such as the assumption of the title *imperator*, the wearing of imperial robes, the appointment of consuls, *patricii*, and senators, and the right of legislating, remained in a formal sense untouched, even though Theoderic the Great must have looked almost like a real emperor.⁵⁶

K. Hauck's remarks regarding the honour bestowed on Clovis by Anastasius in the year 508 A.D. point in the same direction when he writes:

Anastasius übersandte dem siegreichen fränkischen Heerkönig dieselben königlichen Würdezeichen, die er Theoderich d. Gr. übermittelte.

⁵² Bierbrauer, *Die ostgotischen Grab- und Schatzfunde in Italien*, p. 125 and pp. 292–3, pl. 26, 2–2a; Alföldi, "Medaglionne d'oro di Teoderico", pl. 1; Palol and Ripoll, *Die Goten*, pl. 12; Alföldi, "Das Goldmultipulum Theoderichs des Großen. Neue Überlegungen".

⁵³ Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, c. 94, MGH SS rer. Langob., ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 337–8.

⁵⁴ *Excerpta Valesiana* 2, 64, ed. Veh, p. 1226.

⁵⁵ Claude, "Zur Königszerhebung Theoderichs des Großen", p. 5.

⁵⁶ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 289.

Anastasius sent the victorious Frankish king the same royal insignia which he bestowed upon Theoderic the Great.⁵⁷

Wolfram showed that similar tendencies can be proved with regard to public law when he states:

In virtue of the contractually guaranteed right of *praeregnare*, the Gothic king had become *indeed a real emperor*, a *princeps Romanus* who called the Roman *imperatores* his predecessors.⁵⁸

Wolfram also observes:

Die italischen Föderaten, die Goten, erheben keinen Kaiser, sondern einen kaisergleichen König.

The Italian federates, the Goths, do not raise an emperor but, rather, a king on a par with an emperor.⁵⁹

With all the respect shown by Theoderic to the Eastern Roman emperor on an institutional level, and the reservation of certain imperial privileges, there can be no doubt that in certain points the distinction between emperor and king almost disappeared beyond recognition. This is illustrated by the fact that—contrary to imperial legislation—during the celebrations to mark his *tricennalia*, Theoderic donated not just silver but also gold, which was actually reserved for the emperor only.⁶⁰

The tendency towards *imitatio imperii* within the territory of the Empire which can be observed in Theoderic's actions must now also be presumed to have existed with regard to the owner of the treasure from Pietroasa. However, the fact that outside the Empire there was less scope for exerting influence meant that more obvious forms of imitation were possible there than in the case of Theoderic, who was restricted by numerous legal and customary restraints.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Hauck, "Von einer spätantiken Randkultur zum karolingischen Europa", p. 30. Regarding the events in Tours, cf. however: McCormick, "Clovis at Tours, Byzantine public ritual and the origins of medieval ruler symbolism".

⁵⁸ Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 288.

⁵⁹ Wolfram, "Gotisches Königstum und römisches Kaisertum von Theodosius bis Justinian I.", p. 27; Prokop, *BG* 5 (1), 1, 26, ed. Veh (1966), pp. 12–3: "He rejected the insignia and title of a Roman emperor. All his life he let himself be called *rex*—which is what barbarians called their leader. However, he ruled his subjects with full imperial power."

⁶⁰ Ensslin, *Theoderich der Große*, p. 114; Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History*, p. 176.

⁶¹ Claude, "Zur Begründung familiärer Beziehungen zwischen dem Kaiser und barbarischen Herrschern".

In addition, the other items of the treasure from Pietroasa (Fig. 18)—above all the so-called Eagle Brooch—which must also be regarded as an imitation of the *Kaiserfibel*,⁶² the collar and the so-called “Ibis” pair of brooches, and the large set of tableware and drinking vessels—all made of gold and decorated with precious stones—confirm the impression of an attempt to imitate late Roman forms of representation of the imperial court.⁶³

⁶² Although one cannot recognise any technical construction typical of brooches from the late Roman-early Byzantine era, the eagle brooch cannot be regarded as part of a woman's traditional costume since it is a single item in its own right. Rather, despite the fact that the East Germanic traditional costume did not feature any brooches, against the background of the *imitatio Imperii* it must be assumed that it belonged to a man.

⁶³ Brown came to a similar conclusion (Brown, “The brooches in the Pietroasa treasure”, pp. 115–116): “Emperors wear jewelled brooches with pendants, officials wear plain crossbow brooches. It appears then that the owner of the Pietroasa brooch was imitating not merely Roman fashion, but imperial fashion, as though he considered himself on a par with the emperor. . . . The Pietroasa treasure includes other items of personal jewellery, torcs, jewelled collars and bracelets. All are richly ornamented, and some may have been worn together with the brooches; but it is the brooches themselves which give the best indication of the significance of the hoard. They are the personal jewellery of a man and of one or two women who saw themselves as equivalent to the Roman imperial family. It is hard to see this as anything less than the regalia of a Gothic King.” However, the assumption of a public image directly modelled on the imperial representation says nothing about the legal relationship between the owner of the Pietroasa treasure and the Empire. Presumably he was one of the many self-proclaimed *kings* of the Carpathian Basin with whom the Byzantine Empire had concluded a *foedus*. (With regard to the relationship between the emperor and the barbarian rulers see: Chrysos, “The title BASILEUS in early Byzantine international relations”; Chrysos, “Der Kaiser und die Könige”; Claude, “Zur Begründung familiärer Beziehungen zwischen dem Kaiser und barbarischen Herrschern”, p. 41, note 6).

FIGURES 1-18

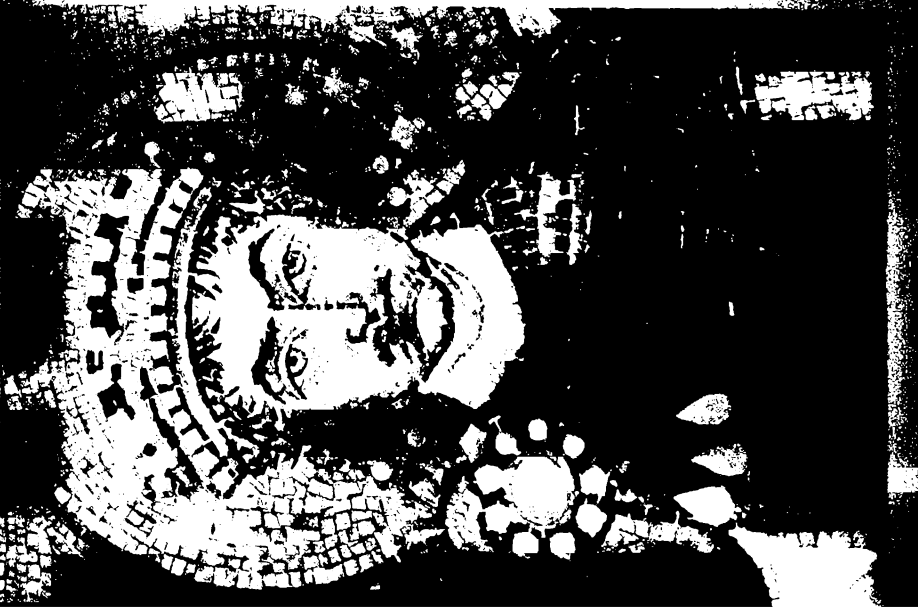


Fig. 1. Mosaic of Justinian I. (S. Vitale, Ravenna) around 527.
von Matt, *Ravenna* (Köln, 1971), pl. 88.



Fig. 2. Portrait of Theodosius I. (Missonum of Theodosius, Madrid) dated 388. A. Grabar, *L'Etat romain d'Justinien*, Paris, 1966, p. 378.



Fig. 3. Distribution of so-called *Kaiserfibeln* in south-east Europe. 1. Ostrovany, 2. Pietroasa, 3. Szilágysomlyó I and 4. Rebrin (after RGK-map).



Fig. 4. Front side of the brooch from Ostrovany. Author's photograph (length with pendants: 14,7 cm).

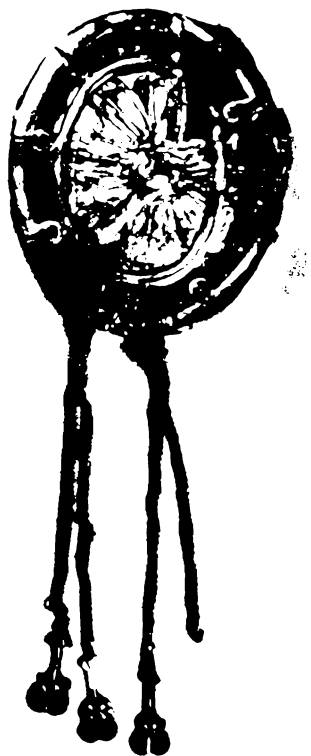


Fig. 5. Reverse of the brooch from Ostrovany. Author's photograph (length with pendants: 14,7 cm).



Fig. 6. Detail of the brooch from Ostrovany. Author's photograph.



Fig. 7. Earrings and pendant of the Olbia treasure. M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection 2: Jewelry, Enamels and Art of the Migration Period* (Washington, D.C., 1965), pp. 117-119, no. 166. Author's photograph (length with pendants: 14,7 cm), A, pl. 80 (pectoral) and no. 166, F, pl. 82 (earrings).



Fig. 8. Reverse of the pectorale from Cluj-Someșeni. Author's photograph.

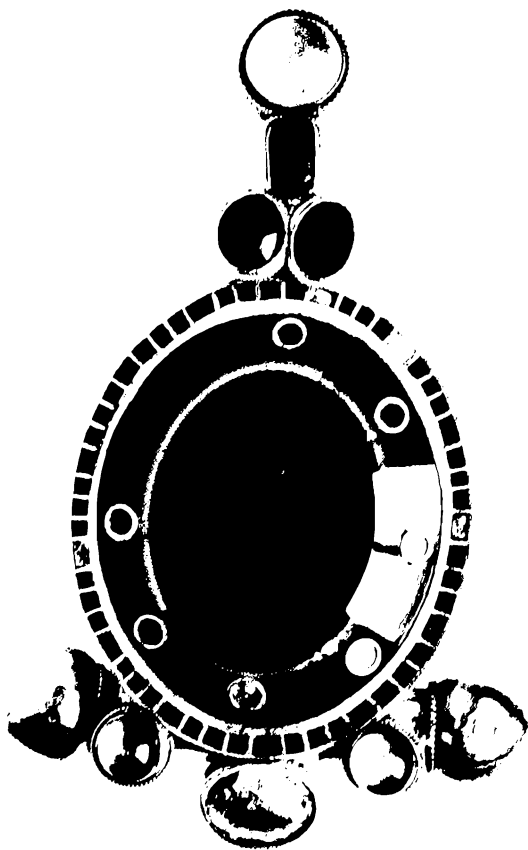


Fig. 9. Front side of the brooch from Szilágysomlyó I. National Museum Budapest (length 17,1 cm; I would like to thank A. Kiss for his efforts.).

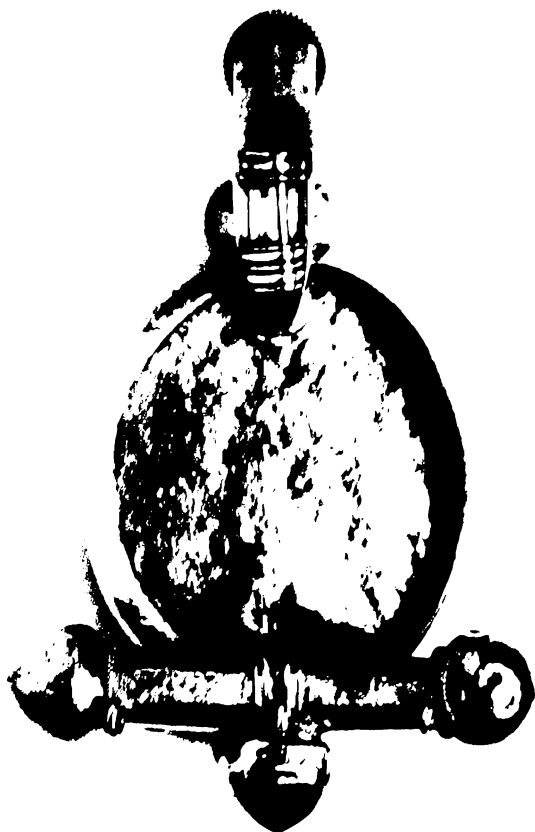


Fig. 10. Reverse side of the brooch from Szilágysomlyó I.
National Museum Budapest (length 17,1).

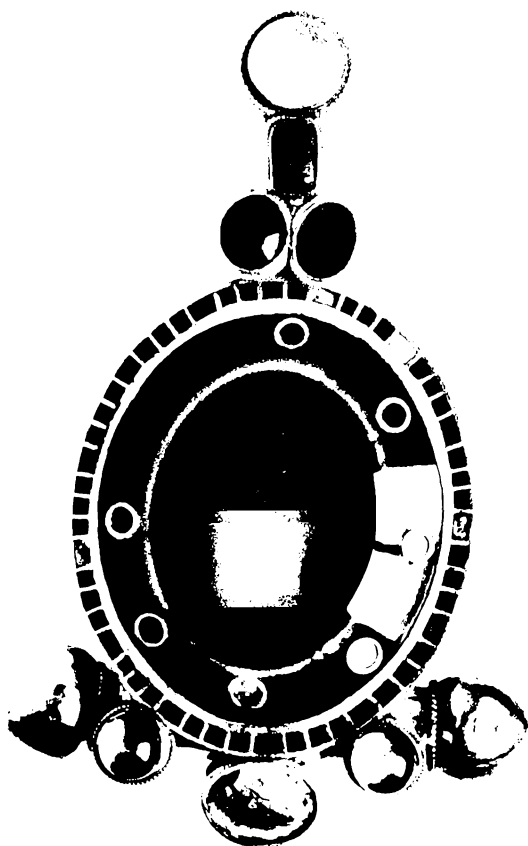


Fig. 9. Front side of the brooch from Szilágysomlyó I. National Museum Budapest (length 17,1 cm; I would like to thank A. Kiss for his efforts .).

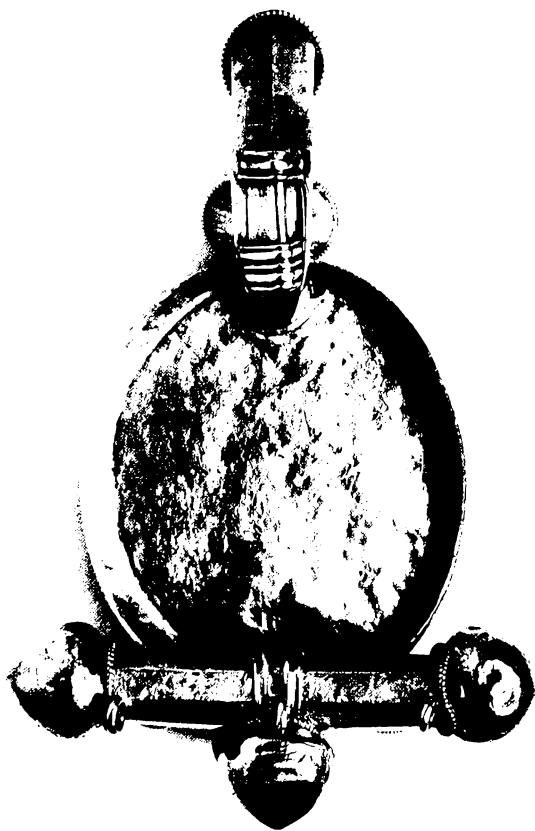


Fig. 10. Reverse side of the brooch from Szilágysomlyó I.
National Museum Budapest (length 17,1).

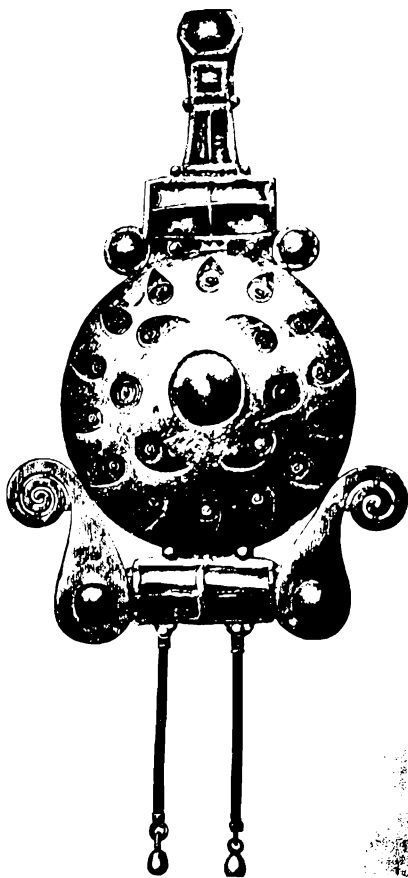


Fig. 11. Front side of the small brooch from
Pietroasa. A. Odobescu, *Le Trésor de Petrossa*.
Historique – Description. Etude sur l'orfèvrerie
antique (Paris, 1896), ill. 99.

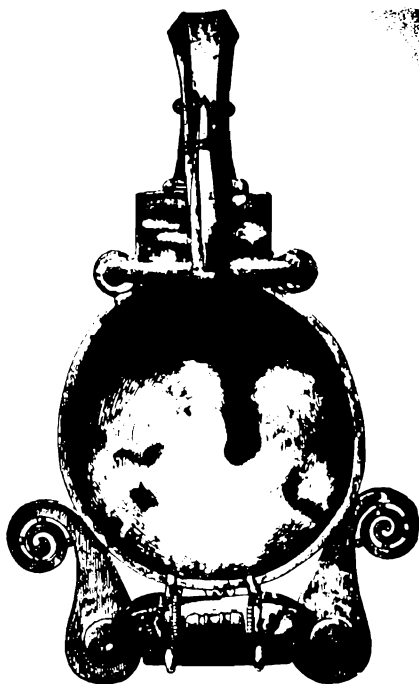


Fig. 12. Reverse side of the small brooch from
Pietroasa. A. Odobescu, *Le Trésor de Petrossa*.
Historique – Description. Etude sur l'orfèvrerie
antique (Paris, 1896), ill.101.

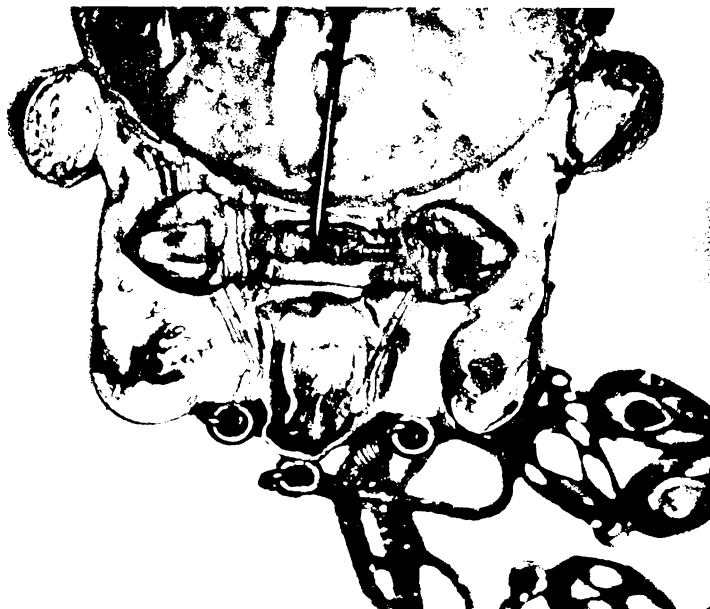


Fig. 13. Detail of the fastening system of the middle brooch from Pietroasa.
Author's photograph (length without pendants: 12 cm).

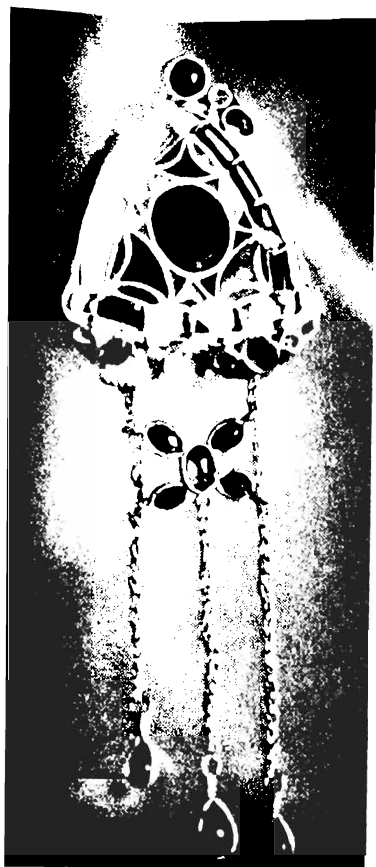


Fig. 14. Front side of the brooch from Rebrin. Author's photograph (length without pendants: 12 cm).



Fig. 15. Reverse side of the brooch from Rebrin. Author's photograph (length with pendants: 19 cm).

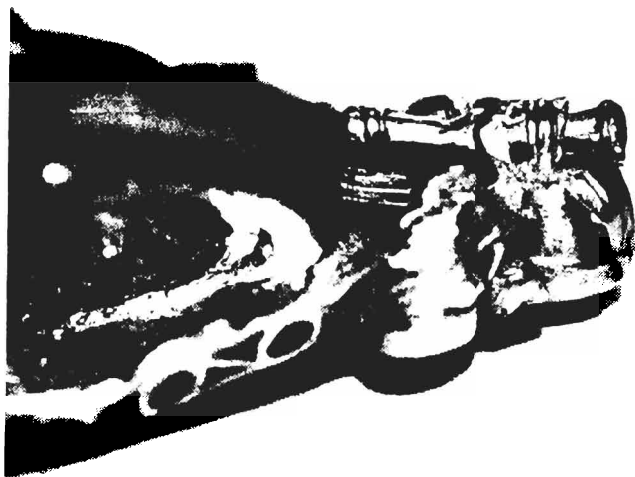


Fig. 16. Detail of the fastening system of the brooch from Rebrin. Author's photograph (length with pendants: 19 cm).



Fig. 17. Medallion of Theoderic the Great from Morro d'Alba.
P. de Palol and G. Ripoll, *Die Goten. Geschichte und Kunst in
Westeuropa* (Stuttgart and Zurich, 1988).



Fig. 18. The Pietroasa treasure. A. Odobescu, *Le Trésor de Petrossa. Historique – Description. Etude sur l'orfèvrerie antique* (Paris, 1889-1900).