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ON THE ORIGIN OF THE SHIELD BOSSES OF THE TYPE DOBRODZIEŃ

MICHEL KAZANSKI 

The shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień possess typical longitudinal flutes or facets on the calotte. These artefacts are well known in the *Barbaricum*, particularly in the Middle Danube area and to the north of the Carpathians, with a few isolated finds documented to the east of the Carpathians, on the eastern Black Sea coast, and on the Roman empire's Danubian frontier. The images of the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień rarely occur on the Roman pictures (the *Monza diptych*) and on the metalware discovered in the *Barbaricum* (horse tack plates from Untersiebenbrunn). The period of existence of the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień as a whole corresponds to 370s–430s. The article suggests the Roman origin of this weaponry: most likely, it was manufactured in a workshop in the Middle Danube area. Moreover, it is still possible that there were some Germanic prototypes for faceted shield bosses were known in the Germanic context already in the late 1st and 2nd c.

Keywords: Middle Danube area, Great Migration Period, shield boss, Stilicho.

The shield bosses called Dobrodzień-Zieling T type (Kazanski 1988, 76, fig. 6; 7; 2019; Ščukin 1992; Zieling 1989, 160–162) stand out for their spheroconical, rather high calotte featuring vertical fluting or faceting and sometimes a horizontal flute at the base of the calotte and relatively narrow eaves. This article will discuss the possible origin of these artefacts. Most finds of these shield bosses originate from barbarian sites in Central Europe relatable with the Germans from the Late Roman and Early Migration periods (Fig. 1: a). Therefore, the artefacts in question are sometimes called Germanic (see e.g. Feugère 1993, 248). However, there is one shield boss discovered in the Eastern Baltic context, in a grave at the cemetery of Krikštonys in the Neman area (Appendix no. 1; Fig. 2: 1). In the European *Barbaricum* east of the Carpathians, there is only one known shield boss discovered at the settlement from the Roman period called Zaliski, in Western Ukraine (Appendix no. 10; Fig. 2: 3). There are three shield bosses originating from the territory of present-day Abkhazia on the eastern Black Sea coast (Appendix no. 11; 12; Fig. 3: 6–8). Finally, there is a shield boss found in the territory of the Roman Empire, in the fort of Hinova on the Danube (Appendix no. 13; Fig. 3: 5).

Discussing the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień, it is worth mentioning their ancient images. The best known is a diptych from Monza (Fig. 4: 1), which is most often related to the famous Roman military commander of Vandal origin Stilicho and is dated to ca 395 (for

details see: Küllerich/Torp 1989, with bibliography). I would like to call the researchers' attention to the distinct image of a shield boss of the type Dobrodzień on circular horse tack plates from the all-known grave in Untersiebenbrunn in Lower Austria (Fig. 4: 2; see e.g. Tejral 2011, fig. 125). It is demonstrative that the fine 'shield boss' from Untersiebenbrunn shows the same star-shaped field as that of the shield boss from the *Monza diptych*. The find from Untersiebenbrunn is a reference point for the Stage D2 (the so-called Untersiebenbrunn horizon) of the *Barbaricum* timeline (380s/400s–440s/450s). According to the summary of the finds in close assemblages, the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień possibly date from the late Stage C3 (generally, 300s/320s–350s/370s) to the early Stage D2 (380s/400s–440s/450s) according to the European *Barbaricum* timeline, i.e. 370s–430s (for details see: Kazanski 2019, 160–163, with bibliography).

Although almost all the known shield bosses in question originate from the barbarian, primarily Germanic, context, I think it sounder that this weaponry type was of the Roman origin: perhaps it was initially related to the workshops in Pannonia and Noricum. An argument supporting the Roman origin of these shield bosses is the already mentioned diptych from Monza (Fig. 4: 1). I think it would be totally improbable to imagine Stilicho, similarly to any other high-ranked barbarian living in the Empire as a possible

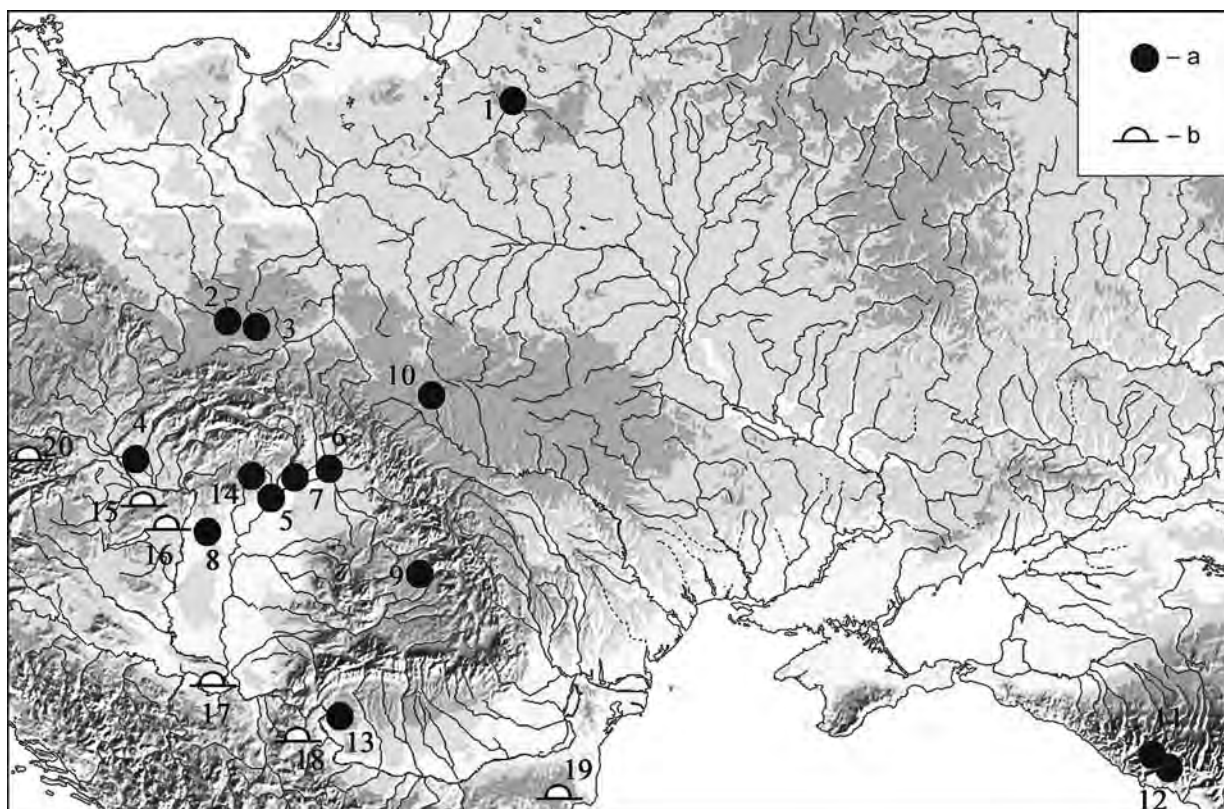


Fig. 1. Distribution map. a – the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień (after Kazanski 2019, fig. 1); b – the location of the *scutaria* on the Danube (after Bishop/Coulston 1993, fig. 135). 1 – Krikštonys (App. no. 1); 2 – Dobrodzień (App. no. 2); 3 – Olsztyn (App. no. 3); 4 – Mušov (App. no. 4); 5 – Tiszavalk (App. no. 5); 6 – Tiszakarád-Inasa (App. no. 6); 7 – Tiszadob-Sziged (App. no. 7); 8 – Ujhartyán (App. no. 8); 9 – Budești (App. no. 9); 10 – Zaliski (App. no. 10); 11 – Shapka-Abgydzrakhu (App. no. 11); 12 – Shapka-Akh'iatsrarkhu (App. no. 12); 13 – Hinova (App. no. 13); 14 – Szihalom-Budaszög (App. no. 14); 15 – Carnuntum; 16 – Aquincum; 17 – Sirmium; 18 – Horreum Margi; 19 – Marcianopolis; 20 – Lauriacum.

owner of the diptych, agreeing to have any 'barbarian' feature on his official portrait. Such an interpretation contradicts all what we already know about the integration of barbarians into the Roman governmental structure. 'Barbarian' material culture was absolutely not acceptable to the Western Roman power elite.

In 417, a special decree prohibiting barbarian haircuts and barbarian clothes of animal hides/furs in Rome and neighbouring regions was published (*Codex Theodosianus* 14. 10. 4 as cited in: Chastagnol 1976, 94); according Pseudo-Aurelius Victor's account, Emperor Gratian (375–383) aroused the hatred of his troops against himself when he made public appearances wearing Alanic, i.e. barbarian, attire (*Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, Epit.*, 411. 47: Gratian and Maximus). It hardly was any general of barbarian origin in Roman service allowing himself such an extravagant behaviour. It is worth remembering that Stilicho was actually accused of having barbarian sympathies (Stein 1959, 253; *Rutilus Namatianus, De reditu* 2. 16–60, as cited in:

Chastagnol 1976, 83, 84), which finally appeared the cause of his murder.

There is an interpretation of the 'barbarian' shield boss on the *Monza diptych* as an evidence of the new fashion launched by the leaders of barbarian *foederati* (Kargopol'tsev/Bazhan 1993, 117). This fashion really existed in the Great Migration: in the Western Roman Empire, it is documented by military leaders' graves of the Untersiebenbrunn horizon (see above), such as Mundolsheim, Fürst, Lébény-Magasmart, and Lengyeltóti (for details see Kazanski 1999). However, the commanders of the troops of barbarian *foederati* in Roman service represented by these graves were obviously ranked lower than Stilicho or Roman generals in general. Along with their barbarians, they actually were outside the Roman society, so they did not order official diptychs for themselves. As for the case of Stilicho, he had no relation to the leaders of *foederati*, being the commander of the Western Roman Empire's regular army (Stein 1959, 226). It should be noted that the shield boss's typical star-shaped

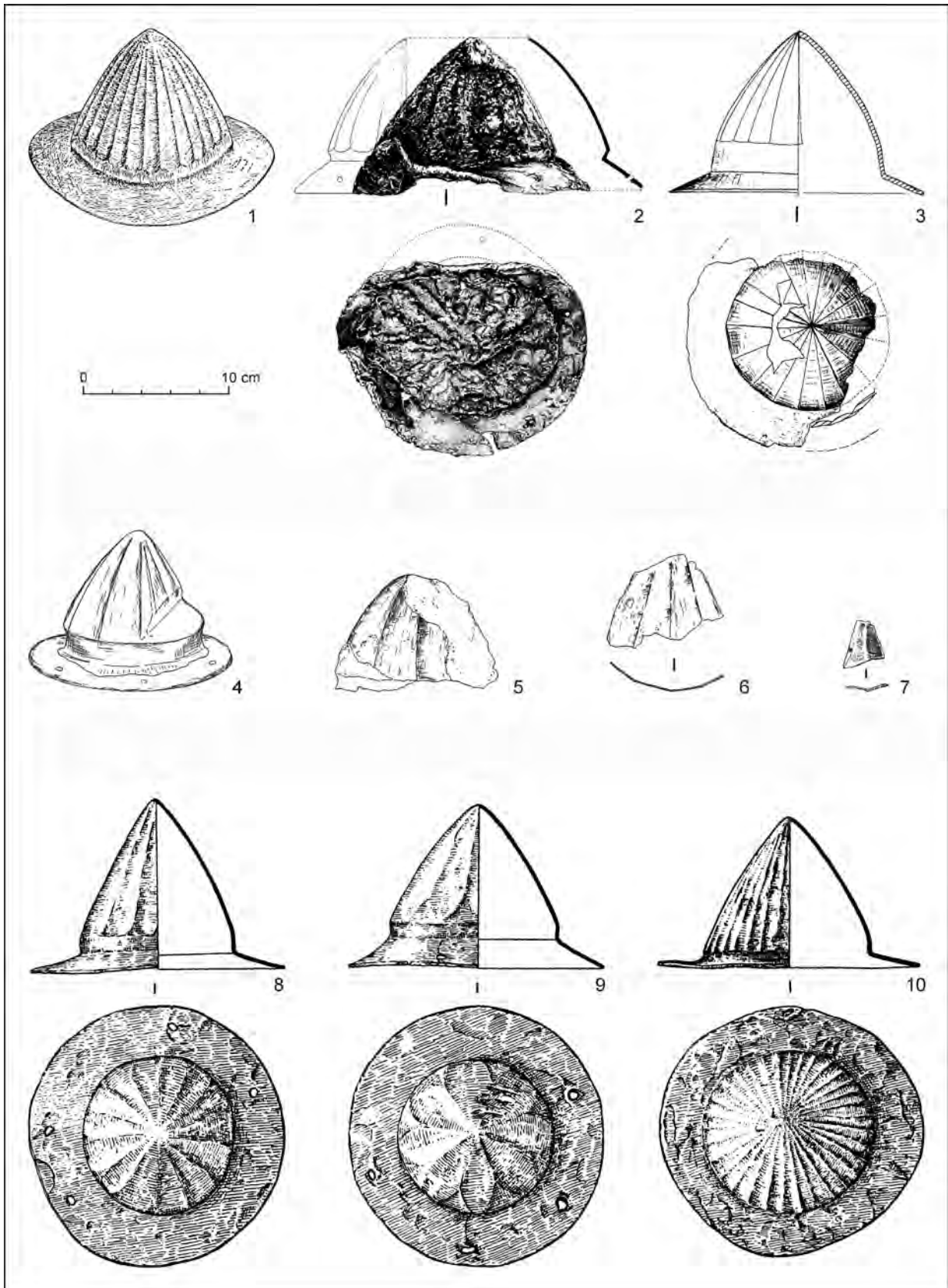


Fig. 2. Shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień. 1 – Krikštonys, grave 2; 2 – Tiszadob-Sziged, grave 34; 3 – Zaliski; 4–6 – Dobrodzień; 7 – Olsztyn; 8–10 – Mušov, building 10 (after Kazanski 2019, fig. 2; 3).

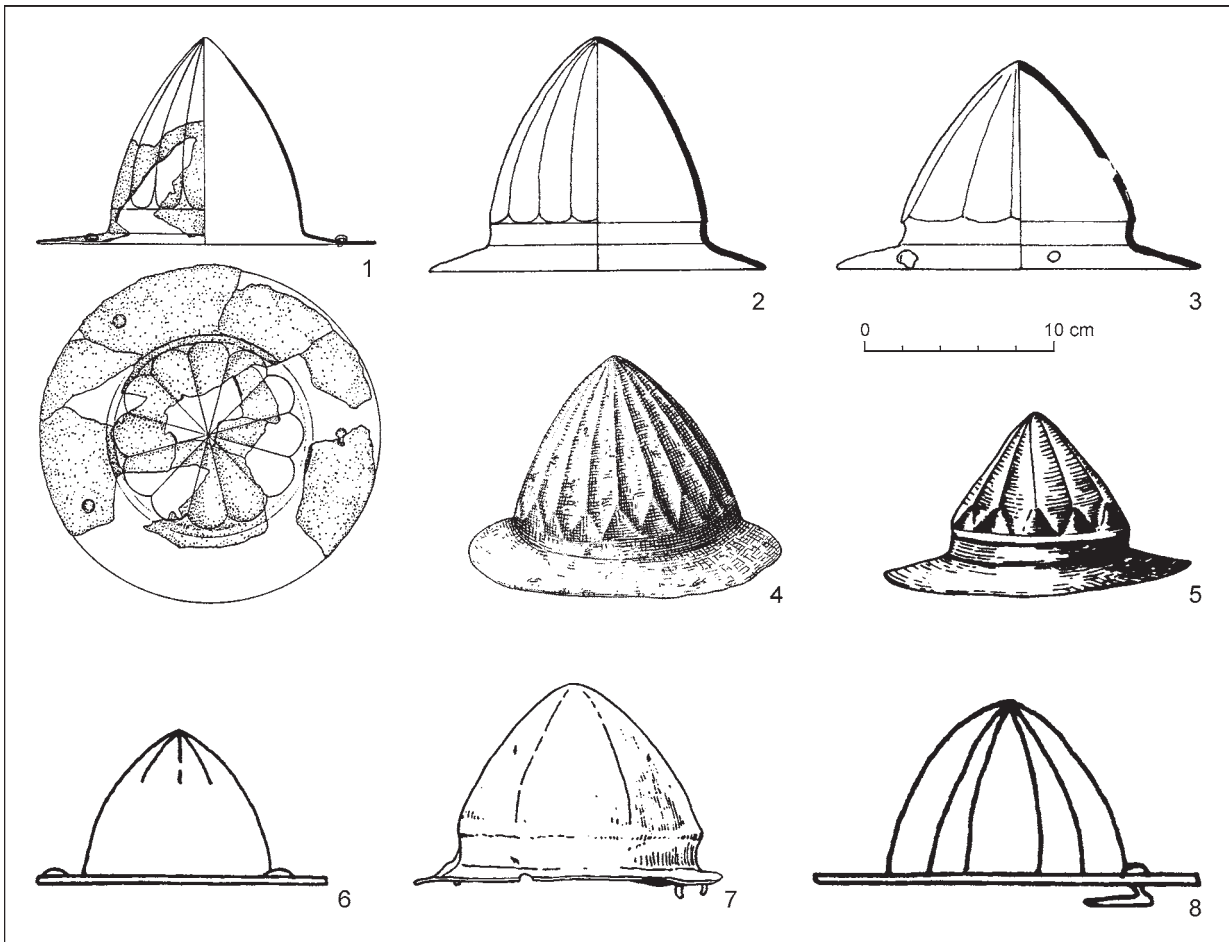


Fig. 3. Shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień (continuation). 1 – Tiszavalk, grave 6; 2 – Tiszakarád-Inasa; 3 – Budești; 4 – Ujhartyán; 5 – Hinova; 6 – Shapka-Abgydzrakhu, out of context; 7 – Shapka-Abgydzrakhu, grave 6; 8 – Shapka-Akh'iatsarkhu, grave 20 (1–4, 6–8 – after Kazanski 2019, fig. 4–6; 7 – after Harhoiu 1998, 177, pl. LXXXIII: E).

eaves depicted on the diptych from Monza and on the horse tack from Unteresiebenbrunn meet with parallels among reliably attributed Roman shield bosses from the first half of the 3rd c. discovered in the fort of Dura Europos on the Euphrates (Fig. 5; James 2004, 175, fig. 95, no. 603, 604; see also Przybyła 2014, 217) and are not known on the shield bosses from the *Barbaricum*.

According to their geographic location in the epicentre of the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień distribution area (Fig. 1: a), the Empire's provinces on the Danube, primarily Pannonia and Noricum, gave the best fit for the production area of these shield bosses, and more precisely, their prototypes. Let me remind that according to the *Noticia Dignitatum*, these Danubian provinces of the Empire, and particularly Lauriacum, Carnuntum, Aquincum, and Sirmium, housed the most part of the state workshops, *scutaria*, which made shields for the Roman army (Fig. 1: b). Moreover,

there are more elements of the material culture in the *Barbaricum* which obviously spread from the Roman provinces on the Danube, such as the artefacts showing stamped designs (for details see: Kazanski/Mastykova 2017, with bibliography). Another argument for the Roman rather than barbarian attribution of the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień is their appearance in the eastern coast of the Black Sea (Fig. 1: 11, 12). Although there were German elements dated from the Great Migration period in this region, first, their number there was much smaller than it is commonly considered, and second, these German elements penetrated to the eastern Black Sea coast with the Roman army (for details see: Kazanski 2015).

However, there still is a certain 'barbarian-track'. Actually, the shield bosses with faceted calotte, possibly distant predecessors of the shield bosses of the type Dobrodzień, are known in the *Barbaricum* as early as the Roman period.

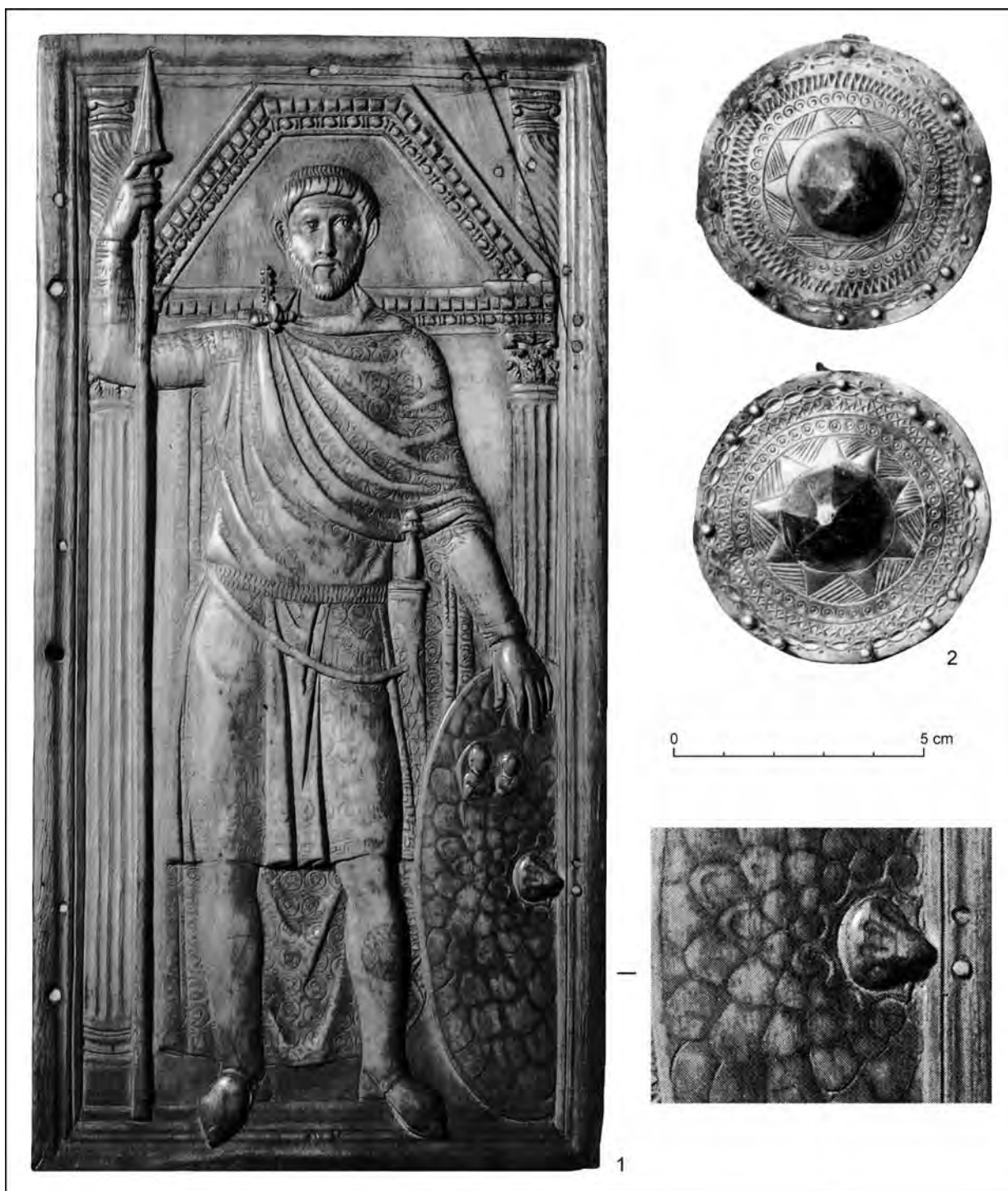


Fig. 4. The images on: 1 – the diptych from Monza; 2 – a horse tack from Untersiebenbrunn (after Kazanski 2019, fig. 7).

It is the case of the shield boss with a pin, of the type Zielsing B2d, from grave 2 of the cemetery of Drogichin-Kozarovka (Polish Drohiczyn-Kozarówka) in western Belorussia which belonged to the Przeworsk culture (Fig. 6: 8; *Szmit* 1921, fig. 39: 47; *Zielsing* 1989, 731, 732, No. 1029; fig. 8). The shield boss with a pin, of the type Zielsing B2d,

and also the brooch of the type Almgren 111 from the same grave (Fig. 6: 6) belonged to Stage B2 of the 'barbarian' timeline, i.e. 70s/80s–160s/170s. It is still possible that further studies would gradually fill in the gap in between of the faceted shield bosses from the Roman period and those of the type Dobrodzień.

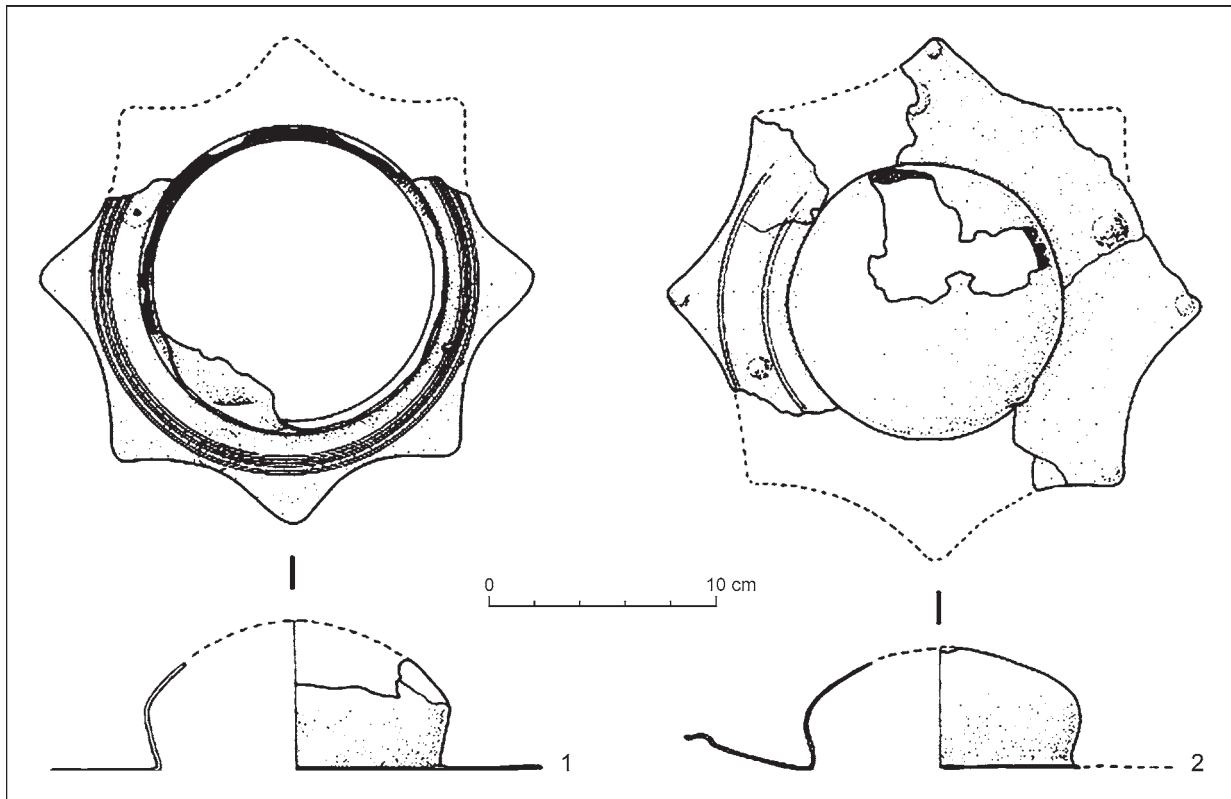


Fig. 5. A Roman shield boss from Dura Europos (after James 2004, fig. 95; no. 603, 604).

APPENDIX

The finds of the Shield Bosses of the Type Dobrodzień

1. Krikštonys (Lazdijų distr.), grave 2 (Fig. 1: 1; 2: 1). *Kulikauskas* 1959, fig. 9; *Kazakevičius* 1988, 126, 128; *Zieling* 1989, no. 1961.
2. Dobrodzień-Rędzina (Opole voi.), cemetery, cremation graves layer (Fig. 1: 2; 2: 4–6). *Szydłowski* 1974, 77, pl. XCIII; XCV; *Zieling* 1989, no. 996–1001.
3. Olsztyn (Warmian-Masurian voi.), cemetery, cremation graves layer (Fig. 1: 3; 2: 7). *Szydłowski* 1974, 141, pl. CLXVII: e, f; *Zieling* 1989, no. 1319, 1320.
4. Mušov (Břeclav distr.), building 10 (Fig. 1: 4; 2: 8–10). *Trňáčeková* 1985; *Tejral* 1986, fig. 15: 1, 2; 2011, 207, fig. 79: 1, 3, 4.
5. Tiszavalk (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county), grave 6 (Fig. 1: 5; 3: 1). *Garam/Vaday* 1990, fig. 10, 11; *Istvánovits/Kulcsár* 1987–1989, 63, pl. II: 3.
6. Tiszakarád-Inasa (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county), grave 35 (Fig. 1: 6; 3: 2). *Istvánovits/Kulcsár* 1987–1989, 63, pl. II: 1.
7. Tiszadob-Sziged (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county), grave 34 (Fig. 1: 7; 2: 2). *Istvánovits/Kulcsár* 1987–1989, 63, fig. 14: 2, 15; pl. II: 4; *Istvánovits* 1993, fig. 14–16.
8. Ujhartyán (Pest county), an inhumation grave accompanied with a horse burial (Fig. 1: 8; 3: 4). *Bóna* 1961; *Zieling* 1989, no. 2006; *Istvánovits/Kulcsár* 1987–1989, 67, pl. II: 5; *Tejral* 2011, fig. 37.
9. Budești (Maramureș county), grave? (Fig. 1: 9; 3: 3). *Horedt* 1982, 147–150; fig. 59: 2; *Istvánovits/Kulcsár* 1987–1989, 48, pl. II: 6.
10. Zaliski (Shumsk distr.), a building (Fig. 1: 10; 2: 3). *Kokowski* 1996, fig. 1.
11. Shapka-Abgydzrakhu (Guilripsh distr.), grave 6 (Fig. 1: 11; 3: 7), and a find out of the context (Fig. 3: 6). *Trapsh* 1971, 25–28, pl. III; XXXVI: 8; *Kazanski* 1994, 447, Appendix 2: 21: a, j; fig. 4: 3.
12. Shapka-Akh'iatsrarkhu (Guilripsh distr.), grave 20 (Fig. 1: 12; 3: 8). *Trapsh* 1975, 26, 27, pl. XVI: 5 (cited as an analogous artefact); XIX: 1 (cited as an analogous artefact); XXI: 3 (incorrect picture, for the image see: *Voronov/Shenkao* 1982, fig. 5: 11); XXII: 3; XXIII: 5; XXIV: 2 (cited as an analogous artefact), 12; *Kazanski* 1994, 447, Appendix 2: 23; fig. 4: 1.
13. Hinova (Mehedinți county), the Late Roman fort (Fig. 1: 13; 3: 5). *Davidescu* 1980, 68, fig. 19: g; *Harhoiu* 1998, 177, pl. LXXXIII: E.
14. Szihalom-Budaszög (Heves county), grave X. 1. B (Fig. 1: 14). *Fodor* 1997, 123.



Fig. 6. Grave goods from grave 2 in the cemetery of Drogichin-Kozarovka (after Szmit 1921, fig. 39: B).

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