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THE FEMALE COSTUME OF THE EAST GERMANIC TRADITION FEATURING BIG TWO-PLATE BROOCHES IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS IN THE GREAT MIGRATION PERIOD

ANNA MASTYKOVA 

This paper addresses the female costume of the East Germanic tradition which was widespread in the North Caucasus throughout the Great Migration period. It was characterised by one or two big two-plate brooches (measuring more than 10 cm in length) worn on the chest or shoulders. Germanic elements, in female costume in particular, spread through the material culture of the North Caucasus in the early stage of the Great Migration period, in the last third of the 4th c. and the first decades of the 5th c. However, the costume featuring big two-plate brooches appeared in the said region, similarly to Europe in general, a bit later, in the second third of the 5th c. Almost all the archaeologically documented cases of the costume in question appearing in the burial context were in the Black Sea coast of the North Caucasus, primarily in the cemetery of Diurso in the vicinity of the present-day Novorossiysk. The 6th c. written sources documented there the area where the Tetraxitae Goths lived. According to Procopius of Caesarea, the Tetraxitae Goths originated from the eastern Crimea. The 6th c. Anonymous Periplus mentioned in the same area the Eudusiani people who spoke Gothic language. In the 5th c., the Tetraxitae Goths migrated from the eastern Crimea to the North Caucasus: the Utigur Huns took them when leaving the northern Black Sea area for the east. Outside of the coastal area, the big two-plate brooches and their diminished copies occurred on the sites of the type Pashkovskii–Karpovka which belonged to the proto-Adyghe population of the Kuban. The costume featuring two-plate brooches was certainly considered prestigious at least by the Tetraxitae Goths who created the cemetery of Diurso. The graves containing the attire in question usually featured rather rich grave goods. All the researchers agree that the costume featuring big two-plate brooches on the chest or shoulders was of East Germanic origin. Its prototype existed in the Cherniakhov archaeological culture. In the Hunnic period, the costume with small two-plate brooches, which were especially widespread in the Cherniakhov culture and the northern Black Sea areas, became the background for the shaping of the ‘princely’ costume with big brooches of similar form. In its own turn, this new prestigious costume became the prototype of the East Germanic attire with big two-plate brooches as a ‘folk’ replica of prestigious East Germanic costume of the Hunnic period. From the second half of the fifth to the early sixth century, this costume was imitated by the East Germanic ‘middle class’ to become widely distributed in the *Barbaricum* from the North Caucasus to the Pyrenees.

Keywords: North Caucasus, Great Migration Period, Tetraxitae Goths, female costume, brooches.

The female costume of the East Germanic tradition in the Great Migration period typically featured one or two brooches on shoulders or chest. Especially demonstrative are big brooches (measuring more than 10 cm in length) often made of a metal sheet with a semi-circular or polyhedral head-plate, a relatively short bow, and an elongated plated foot-plate (Fig. 1: 1–11).¹ This paper will discuss the pattern of the appearance and distribution of this costume in the North Caucasus.

Germanic elements, in the female costume in particular, spread through the material culture of the North Caucasus already in the early stage of the Great Migration period, in the last third of the fourth and the first decades of the fifth centuries

(for details see: *Kazanski/Mastykova 2003a*). However, the costume featuring big two-plate brooches appeared in this region, as everywhere in Europe, a little bit later, in the second third of the 5th c. (*Mastykova 2009*, 51, 52). Almost all the archaeologically documented cases of the costume in question discovered in the burial context appeared in the Black Sea coast of the North Caucasus (Fig. 2: 1), in the vicinity of the present-day Novorossiysk, where the sixth-century written sources documented the area populated by the Tetraxitae Goths. According to Procopius of Caesarea, the Tetraxitae Goths originated from the eastern Crimea. There they joined the Utiguri Huns who retreated from Europe (according to Procopius, in the period when the Vandals already established themselves in

¹ The Russian scholarship traditionally determined them as *dvoplastinchatye fibuly*, the German as *Blechfibeln*, and the French as *fibules en tôle d'argent*. The English language does not have a stable adequate equivalent of the said terms. This paper suggests the term two-plate brooches for the artefacts in question.

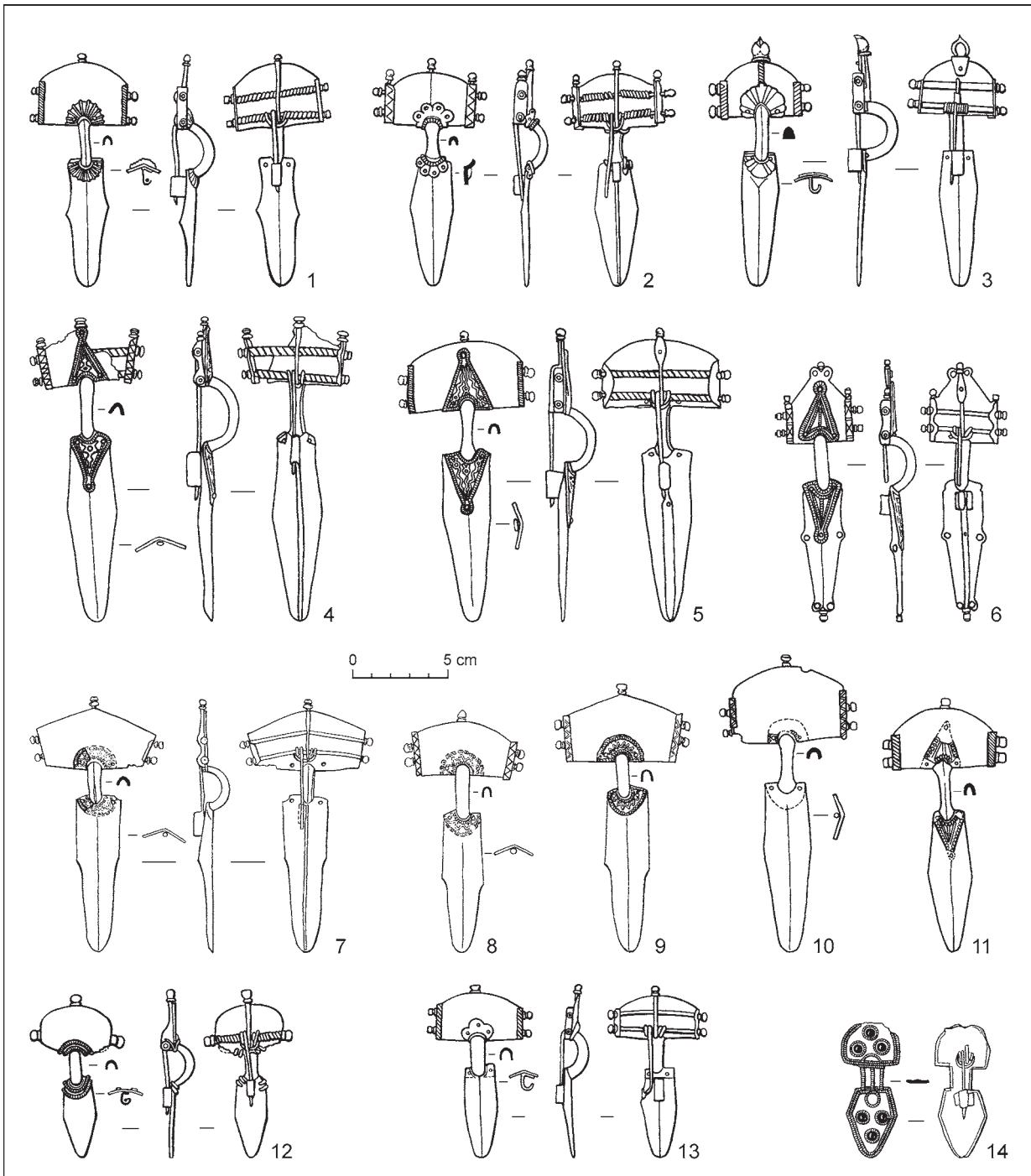


Fig. 1. Diurso, Krasnodar distr. The examples of two-plate brooches from the post-Hunnic period from cemetery. 1, 12 – grave 483; 2, 3 – grave 300; 4 – grave 197; 5 – grave 292; 6 – grave 420; 7 – grave 259; 8 – grave 408; 9 – grave 410; 10 – grave 291; 11 – grave 500; 13 – grave 510; 14 – grave 490 (Dmitriev 1982, fig. 1).

North Africa, i.e. after 429 AD) and migrated with them to the North Caucasus (Procopius 1962–1968, VIII: 5). In 548 AD the embassy from the Tetraxitae came to Constantinople (Procopius 1962–1968, VIII: 4: 11–13). It was a rather numerous people, as in 551 AD a troop of the Tetraxitae of 2,000 warriors, a considerable force in that period, participated

in the war between the Utiguri and the Cutriguri Huns (Procopius 1962–1968, VIII: 18, 22). Another source mentioning the Goths in the Caucasus coast is the anonymous Periplus, possibly dated to the 6th c., the so-called Pseudo-Arrian, which mentioned the people of Eudusiani, who spoke Gothic or Taurian language and lived near the

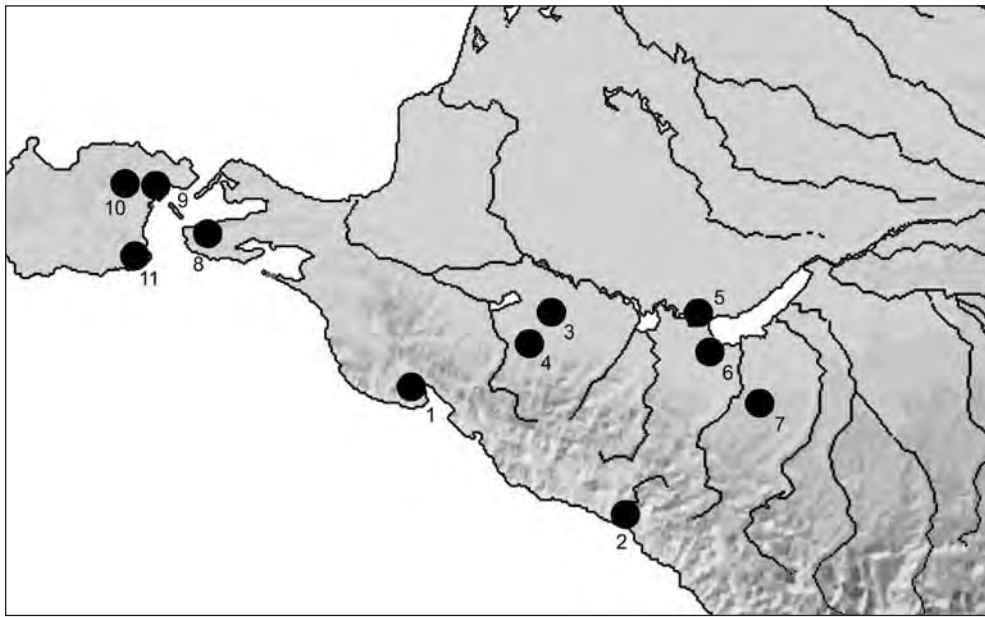


Fig. 2. Distribution area of the two-plate brooches featuring the East Germanic tradition in the post-Hunnic period in the north-eastern Black Sea area. 1 – Diorso; 2 – Bzhid I; 3 – Khabl'; 4 – Varnavinskoe, site 3; 5 – Khutor Lenina, site 4; 6 – Krasnodarskoe Lake; 7 – Maikop; 8 – Taman'; 9 – Kerch'; 10 – Chokrak; 11 – Dzhurga-Oba. Due to the size of the map, the location of archaeological sites is tentative.

harbour of Pagras² (Continuation of the Anonymous Periplous, Codex Londonienses, § 22. Cited through: *Baschmakoff 1948*, 139).

Present-day researchers related the archaeological sites of the Tetraxitai Goths in the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus, in the vicinity of Novorossiysk, primarily to the cemetery of Diorso (Fig. 2: 1; *Dmitriev 2003*). Unfortunately, the cemetery of Diorso has not been published completely; however, the graves containing two-plate brooches have been introduced into the scholarship (*Dmitriev 1982*). There are but fragmentary data concerning other graves. The total number of graves from the fifth to ninth century investigated on the cemetery of Diorso is 525 plus 16 graves of horses. In the excavator A. V. Dmitriev's words, the graves published belonged to the early stages of the cemetery. According to our present knowledge, these stages date from the 450s to 530s/540s AD (for details see: *Kazanski 2002*). Big two-plate brooches occurred in some female and children's graves no. 197, 259, 292,

408, 410, 420, 490, 500, 516, 517. There were smaller imitations of big two-plate brooches in graves 483 and 510 (Fig. 1: 12, 13). Moreover, two-plate brooches became offerings uncovered in male graves 300 and 291 (Fig. 1: 2, 3, 10). There is a big two-plate brooch originating from grave 57 in the cemetery of Bzhid I (Fig. 2: 2); another artefact was discovered as a chance find in Myskhako, but the latter stemmed rather from an earlier stage of the Hunnic period (*Mastykova 2002; 2009*, cat. no. 1: 1–3). Outside the coastal area, big two-plate brooches and their smaller copies occurred at the sites of the type Pashkovskii-Karpovka, which belonged to the proto-Adyg population of the Kuban, such as Khabl', grave 1; Khutor Lenina, site 4; Krasnodar Water Reservoir; Maikop;³ Varnavinskoe, site 3, grave 38 (Fig. 2: 3–7; *Mastykova 2009*, 51, 52; cat. no. 2: 1, 3, 4; *Sukhanov/Sviridov 2018*, fig. 3: 4).⁴

Paired two-plate brooches are documented at the dead person's shoulders (Fig. 3: 1–3; Diorso, graves 408, 410, 420; Khabl'). In grave 483 of the

² *Ἀνονόμιον Περίπλουσ Πόντου Εὐξίνου (Anonymi Periplus Ponti Euxini), § 64: 'Ἀπὸ οὖν Σινδικοῦ λιμένος ἕως Πάγρας λιμένος πρώην ᾤκουν ἔθνη οἱ λεγόμενοι Κερκέται ἢ τοι Τορίται, νῦν δὲ οἰκοῦσιν Εὐδουσιανοὶ λεγόμενοι τῆ Γοτθικῆ καὶ Ταυρικῆ χωόμενοι γλώττῃ.'* See A. Podossinov's translation: '<The space> from the Sindian harbour as far as the harbour of Pagras was earlier inhabited by the peoples called the Kerketai or the Toritai, but now here live so-called Eudousianoι who are using the Gothic and the Tauric language' (*Podossinov 2011*).

³ Most likely, this is the place where the artefact was purchased.

⁴ Moreover, the sites in the western and central Sub-Caucasia contained local replicas and imitations of two-plate brooches, which will not be considered in this paper (see: *Mastykova 2009*, 53–55).

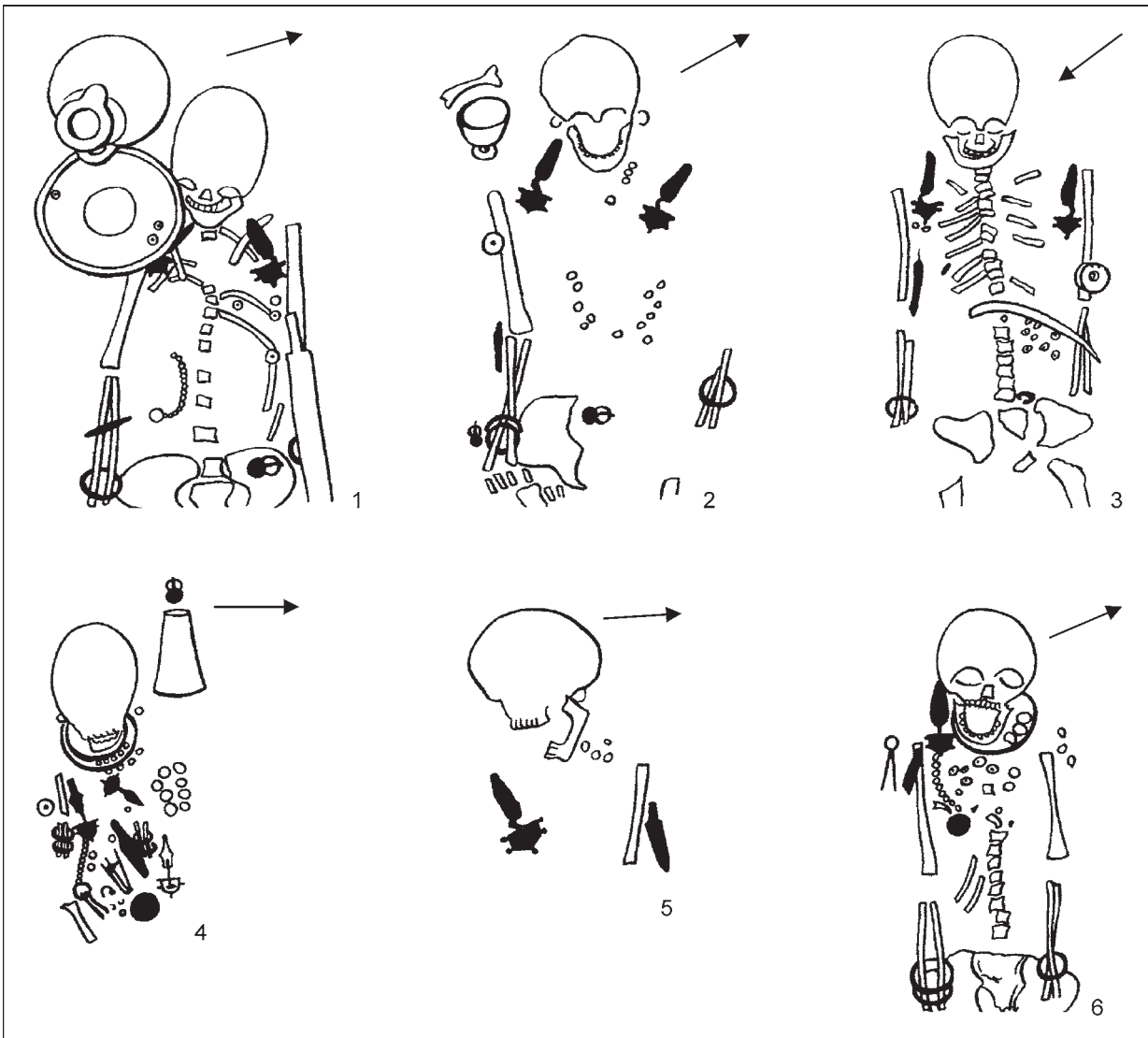


Fig. 3. Diurso, Krasnodar distr. Location of two-plate brooches in the graves of cemetery. 1 – grave 408; 2 – grave 410; 3 – grave 420; 4 – grave 483; 5 – grave 517; 6 – grave 516 (Dmitriev 1982, fig. 7: 1–6).

cemetery of Diurso there were three two-plate brooches: two of them laid on the shoulders and the third one across the chest, closer to the neck area (Fig. 3: 4). There were solitary two-plate brooches located on the left shoulder (Diurso, grave 490) or on the right shoulder (Fig. 3: 5, 6; Diurso, graves 292, 500, 516, 517; Bzhid I, grave 57; Mastykova 2009, 147).

Undoubtedly, the costume featuring two-plate brooches was considered prestigious by at least the Tetraxitai Goths who created the cemetery of Diurso (for details see: Mastykova 2002). The graves containing the costume in question were accompanied with rather abundant grave goods. The attire featuring two-plate brooches contained additional bow brooches (Bzhid I, grave 57; Diurso, graves 410 and possibly 517), neck-rings (Diurso,

graves 292, 483, 500, 516), bracelets (Diurso, graves 292, 408, 410, 420, 483, 490, 500, 516; Bzhid I, grave 57), necklaces of beads (Diurso, graves 292, 408, 410, 483, 490, 516, 517; Khabl'); various earrings (Diurso, graves 292, 410, 483, 490, 517; Bzhid I, grave 57), belt fittings (Diurso, graves 408, 410, 420, 500, 517), footwear fittings (Diurso, graves 408, 410, 483, 490, 500, 516, 517; Khabl'), pectoral chains (Diurso, graves 408, 410, 483, 516; Bzhid I, graves 57), a chain with a beast-nail-shaped pendant (Diurso, graves 516); pendant beads (Diurso, graves 420, 500; Mastykova 2009, 148, 149).

It would be hard to determine the function of the goods discovered on chest, near wrists, on girdle, or at/above the foot of the dead persons: were they the elements of the costume or funerary offerings? Among these finds, there were: accumulations of

beads (Diorso, grave 420 – at the girdle; Diorso, grave 483 – in the chest and belly area, and also at the left humeral bone; Bzhid I, grave 57 – on the chest), mirrors (Diorso, grave 483 – on the girdle; Diorso, grave 410 – at the right humeral bone, accompanied with a chain and bow-shaped brooch fragments), knives (Diorso, grave 408 – across the right forearm, near a chain; Diorso, grave 410 – at the right elbow; Diorso, grave 420 – along the right humeral bones; Diorso, grave 483 – on the chest; Diorso, grave 516 – at the right shoulder, along with a toilet ware set; Diorso, grave 517 – at the left humeral bone, near bow-shaped brooch fragments), a pincers and a bone needle (Diorso, grave 500 – on the left leg), a needle-case and a toilet ware set hanged on chains (Diorso, grave 483 – on the chest), and a metal bulla (Diorso, grave 420 – on the left elbow). A possible explanation of such locations of grave goods is that they were hanged on chains or in some other way to the brooches or the belt. However, it is still possible that they were simply placed above the dead body as funeral offerings. The following artefacts probably became offerings: knives (Diorso, grave 408 – at the dead person's feet), earrings (Diorso, grave 483 – at the dead woman's belly), buckles (Diorso, grave 483 – near the glass vessel; Diorso, grave 410 – at the right wrist; possibly Diorso, grave 408 – at the foot near the footwear buckles, and grave 500 – at the right feet below the pitcher), a bow brooch (Diorso, grave 483 – in a fine pot near the dead person's foot), and a mirror (possibly Diorso, grave 500 – on the left shoulder). Obviously, there was a funeral offering comprising a set of artefacts placed at the dead person's feet: a pair of two-plate brooches, a pair of polyhedral earrings, a fragmented mirror, beads, and a knife (Diorso, grave 500; *Mastykova 2009*, 149).

All the researchers have interpreted the costume featuring big two-plate brooches on the chest or shoulders as of the East Germanic origin. Its prototype existed in the Cherniakhov culture. The female costume of the Cherniakhov population included a pair of small two-plate brooches (measuring less than 10 cm in length) and a necklace of beads, often (but not always) accompanied with a belt buckle, with a comb and/or a set of toilet ware hanged from the belt. This costume also included shell and pyramidal bone pendants (*Mastykova 2007*, with bibliography). Outside the Cherniakhov culture area, the graves containing paired small and medium-size two-plate brooches of the East Germanic tradition were widely distributed in Europe in the Great Migration period, from the South Urals to the Pyrenees (for details on them see: *Ambroz 1966*, 76–91; *Gauß 2009*). The costume

featuring small two-plate brooches, especially distributed in the Cherniakhov culture and in the northern Black Sea areas, formed the background for the shaping of the 'princely' costume with big brooches of a similar form. The latter attire appeared in the Danube area ca. 400 AD (Stage D2, according to the European *Barbaricum* timeline, i.e. 380s/400s–440s/450s AD) in the aristocratic environment, and thence spread as far as the Pyrenees and the Caucasus (*Ambroz 1966*, 86–91; *Kazanski/Mastykova 2003b*; *Kazanski/Périn 1997*). The component parts of this 'princely costume' determined as the style/horizon *Untersiebenbrunn* were borrowed from different traditions: Germanic, Sarmatian-Alanic or, more exactly, Pontic, which was widely represented among the nomads of the steppe, and also among the settled populations of the northern Black Sea area, and finally the Roman one (*Kazanski 1996b*; *Kazanski/Mastykova 2003b*). As an example, paired two-plate brooches in the costume of the type *Untersiebenbrunn* were borrowed from the Cherniakhov culture female costume (*Bierbrauer 1971*; *Kazanski 1996b*, 113–117), though mirrors and fine gold appliques represent steppe, or Sarmatian-Alanic influences (*Mastykova 2014*; *Mastykova/Kazanski 2006*). However, the latter are well known also among the settled populations of Bosphorus and Tanais, and to a lesser degree, in the south-western Crimea. Big belt buckles were possibly borrowed from the prestigious Romanized costume of the fourth and fifth century (*Martin 1991*, 34–42, 55, 56, 63–79).

The horizon *Untersiebenbrunn* contains demonstrative big two-plate brooches plated with gold leaf and featuring polychrome decoration and plain silver two-plate brooches (for the numerous examples see: *Tejral 2011*). By the mid-fifth century (Stage D2/D3 or the horizon *Smolín*, corresponding to the 430s/440s–460s/470s AD), the aristocratic costume of the East Germanic tradition had predominating plain silver brooches, which were direct predecessors of the North Caucasus two-plate brooches (for the examples see: *Tejral 2011*). Their direct prototypes were probably the Danube brooches from *Smolín* with palmette-shaped appliques at the bow (cf. Fig. 1: 1–3), from *Kosino* with triangular appliques (cf. Fig. 1: 4–6, 11), and from *Bakódpusztá* with semi-circular appliques (cf. Fig. 1: 7–10; *Mastykova 2009*, 51, 52).

The North Caucasus brooches certainly were a simplified replica of the Danube brooch under study; most likely, these imitations were made in a workshop at the Cimmerian Bosphorus (*Mastykova 2009*, 51), quite logical for the fashion trends of the period. Simultaneously, by the late fifth century, big two-plate brooches among the Germans in the

Balkans and on the Danube and the Ostrogoths in Italy were replaced with the radiate-headed brooches, which had come into fashion from the mid-fifth century on. In the same period in the second half of the 5th c., there shaped a 'democratic' or 'less-expensive' version of the fashion for the formerly prestigious costume of the Danubian 'princesses' featuring two-plate brooches, which was represented by numerous finds from the Cimmerian Bosphorus, particularly Kerch, Taman, Chokrak, and the vicinity of Kerch (Fig. 2: 8–10; for example: *Ajbabin* 2011, fig. 40: 6, pl. 28: 18, 21; 29: 2, 12, 25; *Kühn* 1974, pl. 230: 51: 30, 35; 231: 51: 39, 40; 224: 51: 93, 100, 102; *Werner* 1961, pl. 22: 99; 23: 101), as well as in more prestigious context of Dzhurga-Oba (Fig. 2: 11; *Ermolin* 2012, fig. 3: 9, 10), among the Goths of the country of Dory in the south-western Crimea (*Ajbabin* 2011, pl. 28: 18, 21; 29: 2, 12, 25; *Kühn* 1974, pl. 219: 51: 1, 6, 7; *Werner* 1961, pl. 22: 98), and in other regions of Europe among the Spanish Visigoths (*Ebel-Zepezauer* 2000, 16–21; *Kazanski/López Quiroga/Périn* 2018) and the persons of the East Germanic origin in Northern Gallia (for the details see: *Kazanski/Mastykova/Périn* 2008). Almost in every place, similarly to the cemetery of Diurso (*Mastykova* 2002), this type of costume now corresponded to the 'working class' of the barbarian society rather than the ruling elite culture. In this connection demonstrative are the finds in the eastern Crimea, in the neighbourhood of the North Caucasus. Although two-plate brooches remained also a part of the prestigious attire in this region according to the finds from the second half of the fifth century in the cemetery of Dzhurga-Oba, they also occurred in the urban cemeteries of Bosphorus (present-day city of Kerch) withing the grave goods of the family tombs of the local 'middle class' (*Ajbabin* 2011, pl. 26: 5; 28: 18, 21; 29: 2, 12, 25). Specific distribution patterns of the fashion for two-plate brooches were most likely related with migrations of some prestigious groups of the middle Danube population. This fashion was possibly brought to Spain and Southern Gallia by the people of a noble member of the Amali family, Vidimer by name, who came to the Visigothic court, followed by his retinue, in 473 AD (*Périn* 1993). In northern Gallia, two-plate brooches possibly spread among the families of Danubian origin who joined the Late Roman/Early Merovingian army (for details see: *Kazanski/Périn* 1997). Finally, this fashion could be introduced into the northern Black Sea area by the German allies of the Huns, such as the Angisciri, who retreated to the east with Attila's sons after the defeat at Nedao (*Kazanski* 1996a, 327).

In the North Caucasus, one can see the beginning of the acculturation of the costume featuring big two-plate brooches introduced there by the Tetraxitai Goths: it was often accompanied with neck-rings (Diurso, graves 292, 483, 500, 516) uncommon for the Germans; moreover, paired brooches, which predominated in the Danube costume, appeared there only in four of eight cases (Diurso, graves 408, 410, 420, 483). The absence of big belt buckles in the graves of the cemetery of Diurso should be particularly mentioned: these buckles, common in the East Germanic female's attire in the said period, are sometimes considered typical for it. Anyway, this interpretation requires considerable corrections. As it has already been mentioned, M. Martin proved that big belt buckles were typical of the prestigious Romanized female costume in the fifth and sixth century. However, Roman ladies wore these belts in their costume without brooches. The fifth-century Roman costume became the background for the shaping of the female attire of the Romanized population of the Burgundy, Aquitania, and Northern Gallia in the late 6th and 7th c. which included big belt buckles sometimes accompanied with small brooches of the Roman tradition. This is enough to prove that the big belt buckles were not a clothing element typical of the East Germans only (*Martin* 1991).

Moreover, some of the graves in the North Caucasus (Diurso, grave 490: Fig. 1: 14; Chmi 1 in North Ossetia, grave 4/little girl's skeleton; Pashkovskaia cemetery no. 1 in the Kuban area, grave 4 of the year 1949) featuring small brooches uncovered the local evolution of Germanic prototypes of two-plate brooches. Although the brooches discovered there belong to the local types, in grave 4 (little girl's skeleton) of Alan cemetery of Chmi 1 the brooches were paired typically of the German tradition, and in grave 490 of Diurso cemetery their position on the shoulder strictly meets with the East Germanic tradition (*Mastykova* 2009, 151). The adaptation of the formerly prestigious Germanic costume with two-plate brooches is well known among the non-Germanic peoples in the 5th and 6th c. Two-plate brooches of local forms distributed among the Balts in East Prussia, Baltic Sea Finns in the modern Finland area, among the Finno-Hungarian population of the forest zone of the Oka and the Volga basins, and even in the southern Urals and the Aral Sea area at the Dzhetyasar archaeological culture. Obviously, in a few cases, like those of the finds in the Urals or the Central Asia where the Germanic presence was hardly possible, the appearance of the brooches in question indicated the fashion (*Mastykova* 2009, 151, 152).

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