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## AN ASSEMBLAGE OF IRON ARTEFACTS FROM THE VILLAGE OF ALAGUJ. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON THE EURO-ASIATIC LAMELLAR CHEEK PIECE EVOLUTION<sup>1</sup>

Abstract:

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The paper discusses iron finds recently discovered in the vicinity of the village of Alaguj, Russian Federation, which were handed over to the collection of the Novosibirsk State University Archaeological Museum. Among them, a knife blade, two stirrups, two bridle bits, two bridle cheek pieces, 11 arrowheads of six different types and one piece of lamellar armour were discovered. This study takes the lamellar cheek piece as a point of departure. The analysis of the find from the village of Alaguj and of the Kursk Oblast cheek piece find allows to state that some of well known finds of lamellar armour plates were misinterpreted. Based on the findings of arrowheads and horse tack, the authors propose to date the finds from Alaguj to the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> or early 8<sup>th</sup> century, that is, to the Second Turkic Kaganate period (682-744) or to a very turbulent period just before the reunification of the Second Turkic Kaganate.

Keywords: Migration Period, Avars, Turkic Kaganate, lamellar armour, cheek piece

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In recent years, many new archaeological finds have been donated to the Novosibirsk State University where they became part of the collection of a newly created museum. It was no different in the case of the assemblage of artefacts which are discussed in this paper. While a local inhabitant was walking along the eastern bank of the Bugul'dejka river (Rus. Бугульдейка), close to the village of Alaguj (Rus. Алагуй), in the Olkhonsky District (Rus. Ольхонский район) of the Irkutsk Oblast (Rus. Иркутская область), Russian Federation (Fig. 1), an iron artefact was seen protruding among the roots of a shrub. This proved to be part of a group of iron finds of exceptional archaeological value (Fig. 2). Employees of the Novosibirsk State University were informed of the discovery and all the finds were handed over to the collection of the newly created museum. This is where they are currently kept. Among the discovered artefacts

were the following: a knife blade, two stirrups, two bridle bits, two bridle cheek pieces, 11 arrowheads of six different types and one piece of lamellar armour. The condition of the finds is exceptionally good because their surfaces were covered with cinder, bearing evidence of having been in a fire. This also shows that these artefacts were possibly placed in a funeral pyre or were involved in some kind of fire ritual. This good state of preservation and the fact of grouping of the finds in one place, as shown in a photograph taken at the time of discovery (Fig. 2), allows us to believe that we are dealing here with what had been an Old Turkic (stone?) enclosure (Rus. оградок). This opinion is strengthened by a statement regarding the area where the artefacts were found (see for example: Dashibalov 1995, 59-72). Unfortunately, as far as can be discovered, no archaeological works have been carried out in this place in order to assess

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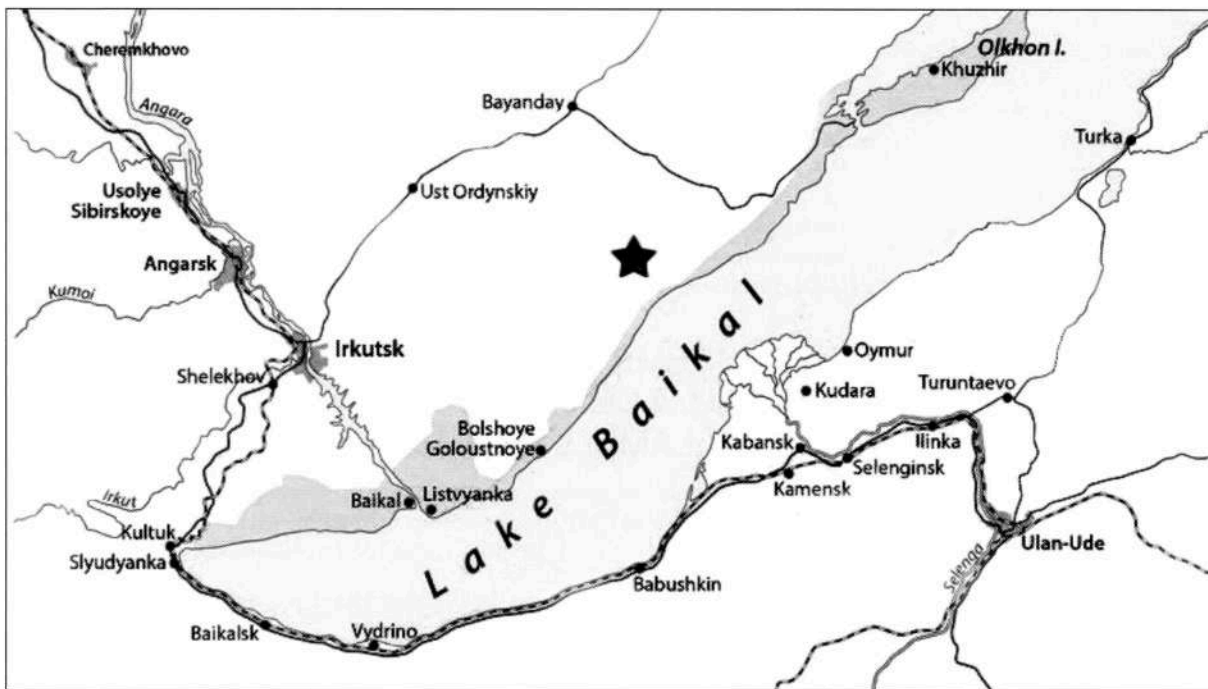


Fig. 1. Alaguj village, Russian Federation. Location of the find. *Elaborated by A. L. Kubik.*

Ryc. 1. Alaguj. Federacja Rosyjska. Lokalizacja miejsca odkrycia zabytków. *Oprac. A. L. Kubik.*

whether the Alaguj village was associated with any known type of ritual complex (Khudjakov 1985, 2001; 2002; Kubarev 1984; 2001). The uncovered equipment nevertheless shows a number of analogies with Old Turkic enclosures within the Altai territory, for example those of Taldura I-III (Rus. Талдура) or the Ker-Kechu burial sites (Rus. Кер-Кечу) (see: Vasjutin, Elin 1983, 118-121). If we take into account the fact that there could exist one specific type of ritual where two stirrups, bridle bits, arrowheads and a knife are assembled in one place, those finds could be grouped into some kind of typology. However, in order to achieve a more accurate attribution of the objects, the authors have used an unusual method of comparing the finds.

Since the 1970s, there has been academic discussion concerning the chronology of similar finds in Siberia. The authors would like to present a different approach to the question of dating, and thus to the attribution of these particular finds. As a basis for the methodology of research which is applied in this paper the authors have assumed a correlation between items of equipment found close to the Alaguj village and similar finds known from burials of western nomads, of course without ignoring references to Siberian finds. Assuming that changes in nomad equipment in Central Asia reflected changes which can also be observed in nomad equipment in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Carpathian Basin, we will attempt at



Fig. 2. Alaguj village. Artefacts in situ. *Photo in the archive of Yu. A. Filippovich.*

Ryc. 2. Alaguj. Zabytki w miejscu odkrycia. *Fot. w archiwum Ź. A. Filippoviča.*

specifying the chronology of the Alaguj finds. Here it should be noted that mixing elements of nomadic equipment with elements of equipment known from settled cultures, or the appearance of nomadic elements absorbed by settled cultures, allows for

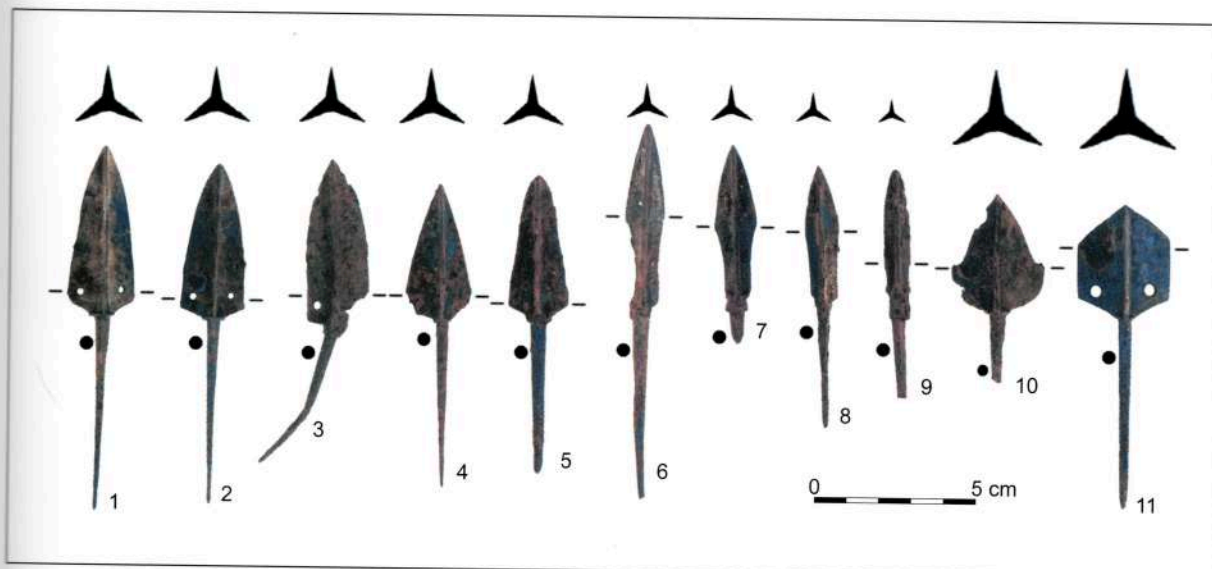


Fig. 3. Types of arrowheads found in the Alaguj village. Collection of the Novosibirsk State University. Photo by Yu. A. Filippovich; drawings by A. L. Kubik.

Ryc. 3. Typy grotów strzał odkrytych w zespole z Alaguj. Zbiory Państwowego Uniwersytetu w Nowosybirsku. Fot. Ū. A. Fillipovič; rys. A. L. Kubik.

a much more accurate dating of changes in nomad artefact typologies. Of course, a similar method of comparison will only make sense if there are at least some different artefacts that can be analysed. Due to the fact that the Alaguj village finding allows for a simultaneous analysis of several types of arrowheads, horse tack elements and armour piece, similar assumptions seem to be justified in the opinion of the authors, at least for an approximation of the peak of popularity of similar military-technological solutions among steppe peoples.

### Arrowheads

Eleven arrowheads were found near the Alaguj village (Fig. 3). All of them share the same characteristics: a trilateral cross-section with the blades arranged in 120° intervals. Some of them have not been fully preserved, and the longest one measures 114 mm (Fig. 3:6). All of them ended with a thickening thorn of a roughly oval shape, which was stuck inside the arrow shaft. Based on the shape of the blades shown in Fig.3 we can group them in six different types:

**Type 1.** Trilateral kite-shaped form with a perforated lower third of the blade (Fig. 3:1-3). Type B IVb1P in M. Holeščák's typology (Holeščák 2015), and Type 16 according to A. F. Medvedev's typology (Medvedev 1966, 59-60, tab. 30:15). We can state that all trilateral cross-section arrowheads with a perforated lower third of the blade which are known from Central Europe (Kosdi 1998, 19; Zábojník 2009, 48; Holeščák 2015, 300) are clearly

related to the Avar Kaganate period and that these types were used from the 6<sup>th</sup> until the early 9<sup>th</sup> century. Type 16 of A. F. Medvedev's typology also belongs to this period. Similar types of arrowheads are also known from the Balkans and from Avar period graves in the southern part of the Carpathian Basin (see for example: Aradac, Grave 108; Nadj 1973, Y 160 /3/:1-3).

**Type 2.** Trilateral tear-shaped form of blade (Fig. 3:4-5). Type B III in M. Holeščák's typology (Holeščák 2015), Type 13 in A.F. Medvedev's typology (Medvedev 1966, tab. 30:13). Arrowheads of this type may be dated similarly to Type 1, though similar forms in the southern Rus territory may have existed from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC until the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD (ibidem, 59). This is probably the most popular type of arrow found in burials of the Avar period in Europe (see for example: Aradac, Grave 108, Nadj 1973, Fig. Y 160 /3/:1-3).

**Type 3.** Trilateral leaf-shaped form of blade (Fig. 3:6-8). Type B II in M. Holeščák's typology (Holeščák 2015), Type 15 in A.F. Medvedev's typology (Medvedev 1966, 60, tab. 12:15). Medvedev dates such a type of arrowheads to the 7<sup>th</sup> until the 9<sup>th</sup> century (ibidem, 60). Similar types of arrowheads are also known from graves of similar chronology in the southern part of the Carpathian Basin (see for example: Bečej, Grave 24, Bugarski, Ivanišević 2016, Fig. 5).

**Type 4.** Trilateral awl-shaped form of blade (Fig. 3:9). Type B VIII1 in M. Holeščák's typology (Holeščák 2015), Type 12 in A. F. Medvedev's

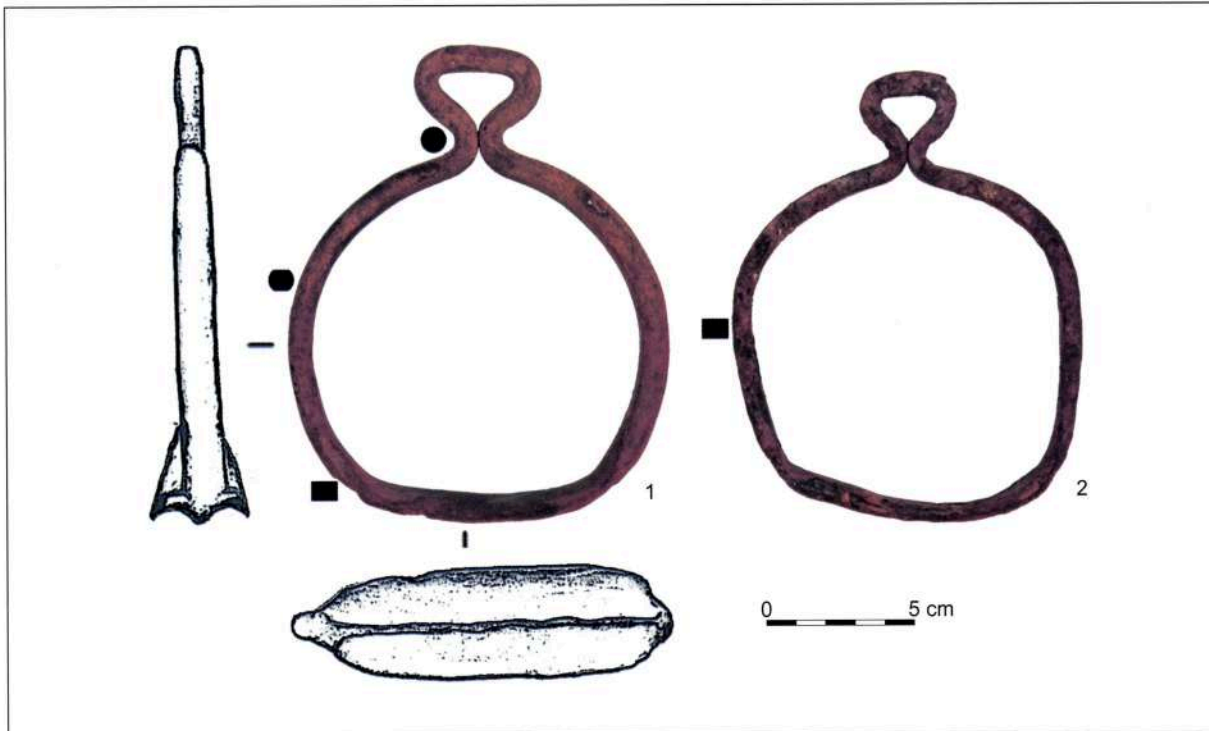


Fig. 4. Stirrups found in the Alaguj village. Collection of the Novosibirsk State University. Photo by Yu. A. Filippovich; drawings by A. L. Kubik.

Ryc. 4. Strzemiona odkryte w zespole z Alaguj. Zbiory Państwowego Uniwersytetu w Nowosybirsku. Fot. Ū. A. Filippovič; rys. A. L. Kubik.

typology (Medvedev 1966, 59, tab. 30:17). Medvedev dates such a type of arrowheads to the period from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC until the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century AD (ibidem, 59).

**Type 5.** Trilateral asymmetrical tulip-shaped form of blade with a wider bottom section (Fig. 3:10). Similar forms of arrowheads do not appear in M. Holeščák's or A. F. Medvedev's typology. There is a similar form in A. F. Medvedev's typology (ibidem, tab. 27:16), but its size is significantly larger than the artefact which is studied here. They represent a local Asiatic form which is known, for example, from an Old Turkic memorial at Bicheneg (Rus. Бичинег, see: Gorbunov 2006, ris. 26:12) or the grave at Berh-Ujmon (Rus. Верх-Уймон, see: Soenov 2017, ris. 14:13), dating from the late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 6<sup>th</sup> century. Arrowheads of a similar but narrower type certainly appear in Europe during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, with examples known from the Livenčovskij VII burial (Rus. Ливенцовский, kurgan No. 35 (Kazanskij 2018, ris. 5). However, this type does not allow us to narrow down the chronology in Asia because similar forms can be seen in, for example, the later Sapagovo burial (Rus. Сапогово, see: Dlužnevskaja 1994, ris. 3:9), which is currently dated to the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries (Iljushin et al. 1992).

**Type 6.** Trilateral hexagon-shaped form with a perforated lower third part of the blade (Fig. 3:11).

Just like Type 5, similar forms of arrowheads have not been isolated in the typologies proposed by M. Holeščák or A. F. Medvedev. However, a trilateral hexagon-shaped form belongs to Type 23 of A. F. Medvedev's typology (Medvedev 1966, 59, tab. 30:23, 12:21-23). Similar forms begin to appear in the Eastern European territory during the 7<sup>th</sup> century and were used until the very beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. At present, trilateral hexagon-shaped forms with perforated lower third part of the blade but with a slightly longer blade are also known from Eastern Europe, for example, from the Voznesenka complex (Ukr. Вознесенка) which is dated by A.V. Komar and B. M. Khardaev to the very end of the 7<sup>th</sup> – early 8<sup>th</sup> century (Komar, Khardaev 2012, 291).

Bearing in mind the proposed methodology, based upon the types of arrowheads we can try to narrow down the peak popularity of the use of similar artefacts among the Euro-Asiatic nomads to the 7<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Horse tack

There is a serious difficulty with the chronology of Asian horse tack elements, because at present there is no typology (at least known to the authors) which would allow for a dating of similar artefacts from the period suggested by the above analysis of arrowheads. We can of course try to use, for

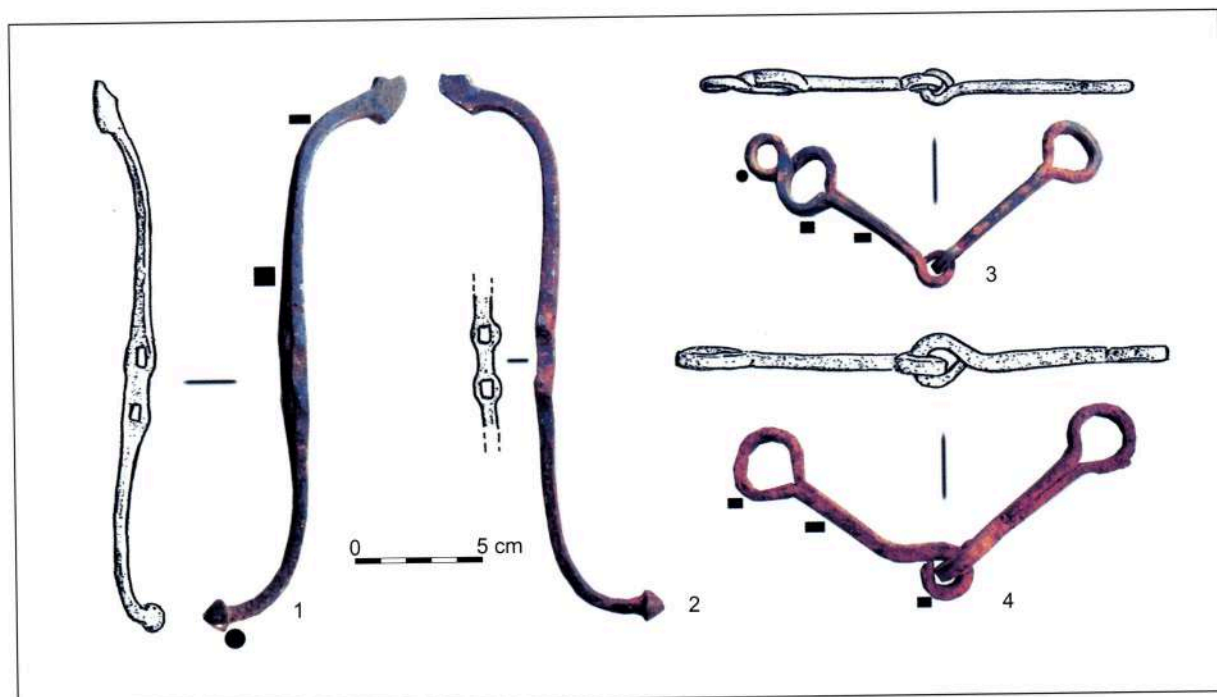


Fig. 5. Bridle bits with cheek pieces found in the Alaguj village. Collection of the Novosibirsk State University. Photo by Yu. A. Filippovich; drawings by A. L. Kubik.

Ryc. 5. Wędzidła z pobocznkami odkryte w zespole z Alaguj. Zbiory Państwowego Uniwersytetu w Nowosybirsku. Fot. Ū. A. Fillippovič; rys. A. L. Kubik.

example, a typology of Central Asiatic finds proposed by G. V. Dlužnevskaja for later period artefacts (Dlužnevskaja 1993), at least to check whether the finds in question were not included in it.

#### Stirrups

Two stirrups of a very similar form were found (Fig. 4). Typologically they are of one type with circular loops and foot-rests with a midrib. However, they differ slightly in overall size. The larger stirrup (Fig. 4:1) has survived in a much better condition, with no visible traces of deformation. Its total height is 149 mm, its total width is 120 mm, and it is polygonal in its lower part's and nearly rounded in the upper part's cross-section (Fig. 4:1). The smaller one (Fig. 4:2) is slightly deformed, and it is polygonal in cross-section. It is approximately 10 mm less in height and 11 mm narrower than the previous one. It seems probable that we are dealing with stirrups from two different sets. This again allows us to refer to finds known from Turkic burials from the Altai region such as those at Ker-Kechu (Vasjutkin, Elin 1983, ris. 3), Kalbak-tash (Rus. Калбак-таш; Kubarev 2005, tab. 119) or the ones known from Turkic Mongun-Tajga burials (Rus. Монгун-Тайга; Pletneva 1981, ris. 19, 99, 123), but also to Avar graves such as that from Mali Idoš (Kishegyes) Grave 70 (Gubitza 1907, Fig. 70). Based on their similarity with stirrups

known from Europe, the Alaguj village stirrups are typical of a type with a circular loop, and belong to one of the simplest Early Avar types. As mentioned above, the stirrup finds are not dealt with in G. V. Dlužnevskaja's typology. However, they show a convergence with the earliest Type 1b<sub>1</sub> of that typology which is dated to the period between 975 and 1025 (-50). They are distinguished from later stirrups by the fact that the tread is very slim and much narrower than the overall width of the apple-shaped cast of the stirrup. Exactly the same form of stirrup can be found in Europe, for example in the Mali Idoš cemetery (Grave 70). This cemetery dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Vinski 1958, 14; Bugarski 2015, 135). Stirrups of exactly the same type were also found in Grave 85 in a cluster of three cemeteries in Campochiaro. The medieval necropolis of Vicene-Campochiaro is related to Eurasian nomads who were themselves related to the Avars (Belcastro, Bonfiglioli, Mariotti 2004; Bocchini, Belcastro 2012, 215). This material has been dated to the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of coin finds (Pohl 2018, 320). Also comparable are stirrups from the Mandelos grave (Ercegović-Pavlović 1982, Pl. I), currently dated to the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Bugarski 2016, 92), or stirrups from the Katanda-3 burial site, Kurgan Nos. 3,11,16,21 (Rus. Катанда-3) from the Altai region,

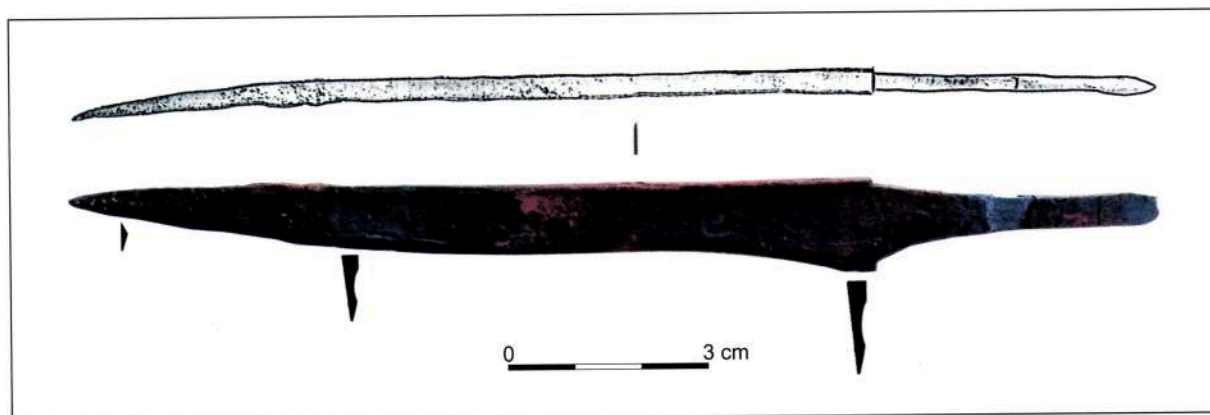


Fig. 6. Battle knife (?) found in the Alaguj village. Collection of the Novosibirsk State University. Photo by Yu. A. Filippovich; drawings by A. L. Kubik.

Ryc. 6. Nóż bojowy (?) odkryty w zespole z Alaguj. Zbiory Państwowego Uniwersytetu w Nowosybirsku. Fot. Ū. A. Filippovič; rys. A. L. Kubik.

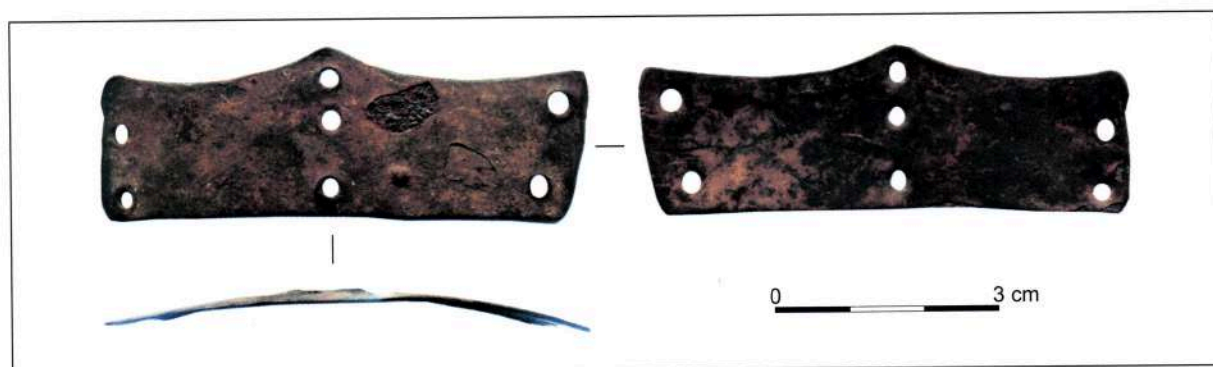


Fig. 7. Lamella found in the Alaguj village. Collection of the Novosibirsk State University. Photo by Yu. A. Filippovich.

Ryc. 7. Zbrojnik odkryty w zespole z Alaguj. Zbiory Państwowego Uniwersytetu w Nowosybirsku. Fot. Ū. A. Filippovič.

currently dated from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Mamadakov, Gorbunov 1997, ris. IV, VII-IX). According to A. K. Ambroz and S. I. Vainshtein, stirrups of a similar type certainly appear in Asia during the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century (Ambroz 1973, ris. 2:19; see also: Azbelev 2014, ris. 1). However, there are works dating these stirrups to an even earlier period (Curta 2008), but the authors consider this dating to be very unlikely.

#### *Bridle bits with cheek pieces*

Two bridle bits and cheek pieces were found near the Alaguj village. The first bridle bit had a total length of 166 mm, while that of the second was 185 mm, and the cheek pieces are 220 mm high. The first or shorter bit (Fig. 5:3) was made of two elements, each of these being made of a bent piece of iron of polygonal cross-section, forged below the loop. At the end of one of them this loop took the form of the digit 8. The bit thus fell into Subgroup b, Type 2a, of G. V. Dluzhnevskaja's

typology (Dluzhnevskaja 1994, ris. 3). The second or longer bit (Fig. 5:4) was made of two elements, each made of a bent piece of iron of polygonal cross-section, forge-welded below the loop. It was thus an example of Subgroup a, Type 1a, of G. V. Dluzhnevskaja's typology (ibidem, ris. 3). The cheek pieces (Fig. 5:1-2) were made of a bent piece of iron in the form of the letter S. One end was flattened in a decorative manner. The other end is crowned by a thickening in a drop-shaped form with a slightly sharpened end. Two rectangular holes are punched inside. It should be noted that the typology proposed by G. V. Dluzhnevskaja is based on the correlation between bridle bits and cheek pieces. Despite the occurrence of bridle bits in G.V. Dluzhnevskaja's typology, they cannot be used as the basis for dating such finds as the Alaguj village cheek pieces which were not included in that typology. However, they show a convergence with Subgroup a<sub>2-3</sub>, Type 1 of G. V. Dluzhnevskaja's typology (ibidem, ris. 3) and Type 1 of Ovchinnikova's typology (Ovchinnikova 1990, ris. 42). Similar



Fig. 8. Lamellar cheek piece found in the Kursk Oblast, Russian Federation. *Photo by O. A. Radyush.*

Ryc. 8. Lamelkowy napolicznik odkryty w obwodzie kurskim, Federacja Rosyjska. *Fot. O. A. Radiuš.*

forms of cheek pieces, S-shaped with punctured holes, are, however, known from the Sarmatian period (see for example: Sulimirskij 2008, ris. 16). Very similar cheek pieces can also be found in the often mentioned Mali Idoš cemetery which dates from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in Turkic graves such as the Bertek-27 kurgan (Rus. Бертек-27; Seregin 2017, ris. 2). The same form of cheek pieces can also be found in the aforementioned Katanda-3 burial site, Kurgan 1 (Mamadakov, Gorbunov 1997, ris. 2). However, apart from Mali Idoš Grave 70, the authors could not identify a Eurasian find having a similar correlation between the bridle bits and cheek pieces as seen in the case of the Alaguj village find. On the other hand, it cannot be excluded that, as was already mentioned above, the bridle bits and cheek pieces found here do not belong to the same set.

Based on the findings of horse tack, we can most likely place the chronology of these objects to the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> or early 8<sup>th</sup> century, to the Second Turkic Kaganate period or to a very turbulent period just before the reunification of the Second Turkic Kaganate. However, it should be remembered that this is merely the most probable dating and without knowing the exact context of the finding it should only be considered as a working hypothesis.

#### **Battle knife (?)**

Among the finds there was an iron knife (Fig. 6) which could perhaps be identified as a battle or fighting knife. Its total length measures 162 mm. Unfortunately, it is difficult to state with certainty which knives from the period under consideration could have been battle knives. This

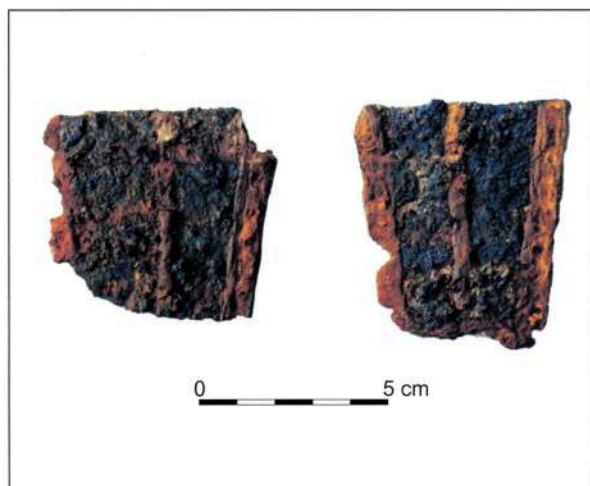


Fig. 9. Two lamellar cheek pieces found in Kerch. Collection of the State Historical Museum in Moscow. Photo by S. Yu. Kainov (photo courtesy D. V. Zhuravlev).

Ryc. 9. Dwa lamelkowe napoliczniki odkryte w Kerczu. Zbiory Państwowego Muzeum Historycznego w Moskwie. Fot. S. Ū. Kainov (dzięki uprzejmości D. V. Źuravleva).

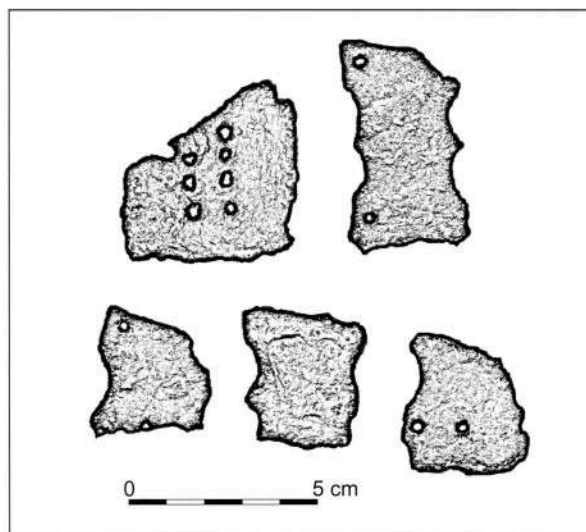


Fig. 10. Lamellar cheek piece (?), the village of Homokmégy, Hungary. Drawing by A. L. Kubik.

Ryc. 10. Lamelkowy napolicznik (?) z Homokmégy, Węgry. Rys. A. L. Kubik.

problem is visible both among those finds from Turkic burials in Asia discussed above, and in those known from individual territories of the Avar Kaganate. In fact, such distinctions are usually made purely intuitively, based on the shape of the blade and its length (Bugarski 2015, 129). For example, I. Bugarski assumed that battle knives are knives with a blade length that is at least 20 cm (ibidem, 136). He based himself on H. Härke's theory (1989, 145) which assumed that shorter knives were too light to be used in combat. Nevertheless, although the total length of the knife in question is 162 mm, its narrow, long and pointed blade may indicate that it may have been used in combat.

### Lamellae

The most interesting of all the finds from the Alaguj village is the iron lamellar plate found there (Fig. 7). In general appearance it is trapezoidal in shape with three rows of holes, two on the edges and one in the middle of the plate. The longer upper edge of the plate has two arched excisions running from that edge to the middle of the plate. The longer edge has a total length of 63 mm, the shorter edge is 61 mm long, with a total height of 20 mm. Based on the correlations between this artefact and a find from the Kursk Oblast (Rus. Курская область) published in 2014 by O.A. Radjush (Radjush 2014, ris. 1-2) (Fig. 8), we can state that we are dealing with a plate from the cheek piece of a helmet. What is more, given the discovery of a lamellar helmet from the Kursk Oblast, as well as a recent finding

of a lamellar helmet from the Stara Zagora region of Bulgaria (Bul. Стара Загора, see: ibidem, ris. 3:c) which includes lamellar cheek pieces, we can offer a new interpretation of a number of finds and also take a closer look at the evolution of lamellar cheek pieces across Eurasia.

Of course, there is a number of different segmented cheek pieces, but the authors will focus on those which are joined in one horizontally arranged row. This is a trait which is typical of Central and Western Asia and Eastern Europe between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. All known lamellar cheek pieces of this type have certain features in common. All have a trapezoidal form, holes on the edges where the plates are joined together, and each succeeding lamellae is smaller than the previous one. However, it may be possible to identify features which distinguish them from each other and that may determine their evolution over time. Based on this fact, the authors will try to divide them into types.

**Type 1.** Trapezoidal plates without decorative excisions. This form may be subdivided into Subtypes a and b.

*Subtype a:* Trapezoidal plate with holes only at the edges of the plate. Recently, breakthrough discoveries have been made in Eastern Europe concerning lamellar helmets from the late Sarmatian period. Some of these still had lamellar cheek pieces, including those from the Andreevskij kurgan, Grave 50 (Rus. Андреевский курган) in the north-eastern part of the Mordova Republic (Rus. Республика



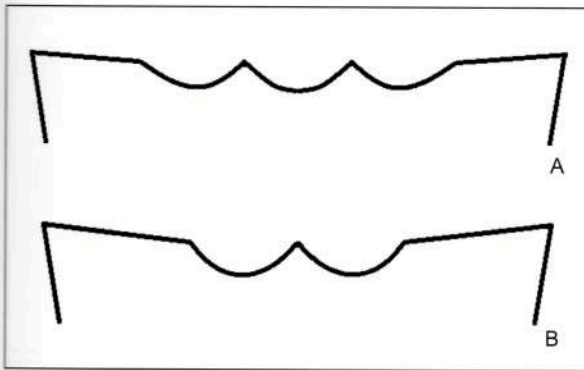


Fig. 11. Comparison of the excision form in the upper (longer) edge of the plate in the findings from Stara Zagora (A) and the village of Homokmégy (B). Drawing by A. L. Kubik (not to scale).

Ryc. 11. Porównanie wycięć w górnej (dłuższej) krawędzi zbrojników ze znalezisk w Starej Zagorze (A) i Homokmégy (B). Rys. A. L. Kubik (bez skali).

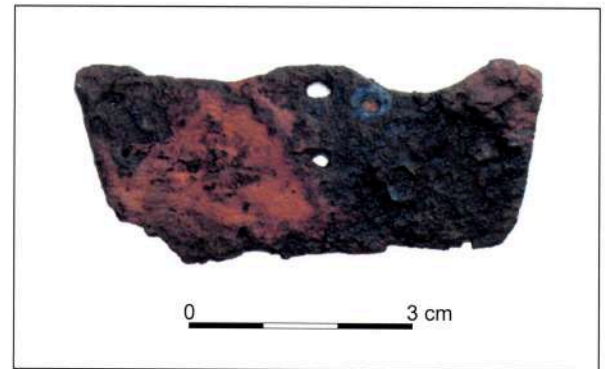


Fig. 12. One of the corroded plates from the second cheek piece found in the Kursk obl. Photo by O. A. Radyush.

Ryc. 12. Jeden z zardzewiałych zbrojników, należący do drugiego z napoliczników ze znaleziska w obwodzie kurskim. Fot. O. A. Radiś.

Мордовия) in the Russian Federation (Zubov, Radjush 2014, ris. 1:2), or the Kipchakovo I burial (Rus. Кипчаковский I курганно-грунтовый могильник), Grave 56 in the Ryazan Oblast (Rus. Рязанская область) in the Russian Federation (Zubov 2011, 68; Zubov, Radjush 2014, ris. 1:3). These discoveries allowed for a reconsideration of findings from Shaikhān-Dherīn Pakistan (Kubik 2017a, 197-199; 2017b, 121-154). Based on those findings, we can state that in the earliest plates of this type which are known to the authors there are no middle holes. These only appear later another stage of evolution over time. In the case of a Shaikhān-Dherī helmet, the plate connecting the helmet's cheek piece with the helmet's skull had an almost rectangular form, plus a row of holes which ran in the upper part of the rectangular plate. This form of connection also evolved later into two rows of holes. Unfortunately, the state of preservation of the findings from the Andreevskij kurgan and the Kipchakovo I burial does not allow for a more detailed analysis.

*Subtype b:* Trapezoidal plate with holes at the edges and in the middle of the plate. In 1881 a number of artefacts were found in the Kerch necropolis close to Hospitalnaya Street (Rus. Госпитальная), including parts of an armour and a helmet (Arendt 1932, 7). Unfortunately, at that time there were no other known finds which would have allowed for identification of lamellar cheek pieces. Among the drawings presented by Arendt, the authors' attention was particularly drawn to Abb. 3:b,d (ibidem, 53). This illustrated a trapezoidal form of plates joined together by leather straps on the edges and in their middle part. Thanks to the help of S. Yu. Kainov and the courtesy of D. V. Zhuravlev, the authors managed to access the finds

which are currently held in the State Historical Museum collection in Moscow (Fig. 9). Their size, form and method of connection, as well as their slightly arched curvature clearly indicate that we are here dealing with lamellar cheek pieces. We can therefore state with certainty say that the Kerch lamellar helmet had lamellar cheek pieces, just like the find from the Kursk Oblast and the lamellar helmet from Bulgaria. Two fragments of them have survived, that is, a central part of the first cheek piece (Fig. 9:1) and a central-bottom part of the second one (Fig. 9:2). The edges are covered with leather. Despite the lack of decorative excisions, and unlike Type 1 Subtype a, there is a third row of holes in the middle part of the plate. These strengthen the construction of the cheek piece. As the finds from Kerch can be dated to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century up to the beginning of the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (based on the work of Kubarev and Zhuravlev, it is possible that the find from Kerch could date later, to the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, see: Kubarev, Zhuravlev 2012, 135-146), we can suggest that during this period a central lining system had developed.

**Type 2.** Trapezoidal plates with decorative excisions, with holes at the edges and in the middle of the plate. This form may be also subdivided into Subtypes a and b.

*Subtype a:* Trapezoidal plates with a slightly curved upper edge and decorative excisions in the central part (fig. 11). At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Bulgaria, in the vicinity of Stara Zagora, a burial was found in which there was a lamellar armour and a lamellar helmet (Radjush 2014, 42). The burial itself should probably be dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, according to V. Yotov, this burial has not yet been published. Thanks to

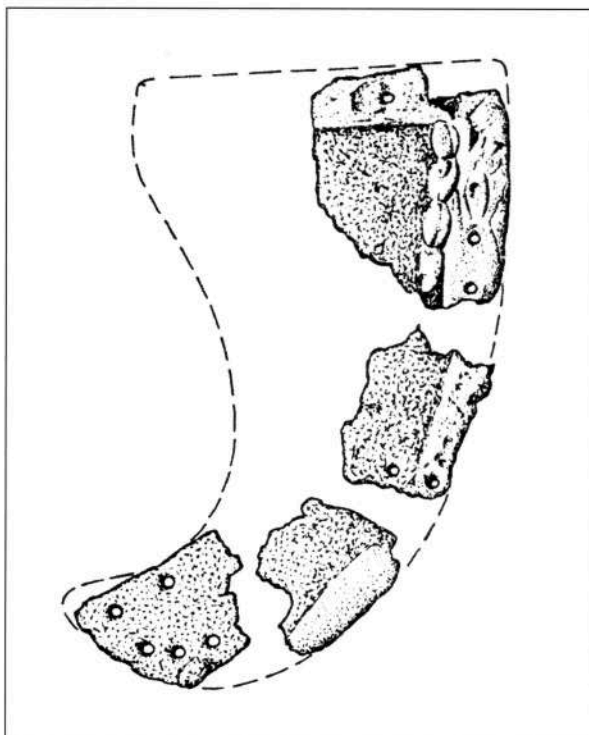


Fig. 13. Lamellar cheek piece fragments (?) from Niederstotzingen, Germany (after Paulsen 1967, Abb. 66).

Ryc. 13. Fragmenty lamelkowego napolicznika (?) z Niederstotzingen, Niemcy (wg Paulsen 1967, Abb. 66).

the photographs of the helmet and the information obtained from Ch. Miks, we can nevertheless discuss the form of the plates of which the lamellar cheek pieces attached to the helmet consisted. They are trapezoidal in form, have three rows of holes, two in the side parts and one in the middle part. The upper edge is slightly arched and has two deeper arched decorative excisions in the middle (Fig. 11:a). A distinctive feature is the preservation of a straight fragment of the upper edge (Fig. 11) of the plate without any visible excision. All plates in the lower part were, however, highly corroded. It is thus difficult to determine whether this edge also originally had excisions, which is important for a discussion of another finding. Near the village of Homokmégy in what is now central Hungary, in Grave 121, remnants of different types of armour plates have been found. In current academic discourse they are regarded as parts of a body armour (see for example: Kubarev 2006, Abb. 3:33-36). On the other hand, D. Csallány (1972, 28) suggested that there might have been remnants of a helmet among these finds. Unfortunately, from the information that the authors managed to obtain from P. Major, an exact description of the finds, also including the find context, was lost during World War II.

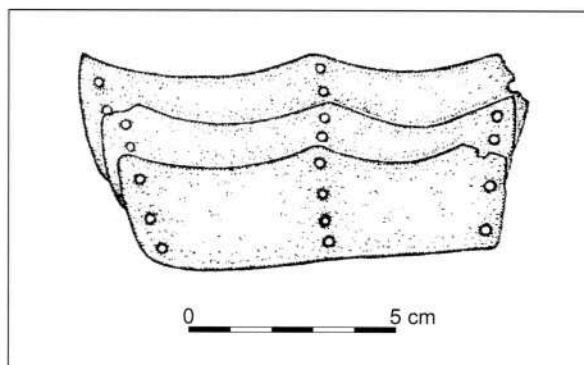


Fig. 14. Lamellar cheek piece plates, the Sary-Dzhon complex, Kirgistan (after Kozhombierdiev, Khudiakov, 1996, ris. 2).

Ryc. 14. Zbrojniki lamelkowego napolicznika z zespołu w Sary-Dzhon, Kirgistan (wg Kozhombierdiev, Khudiakov, 1996, ris. 2).

Fortunately, most of the plates themselves have survived and are now housed in the store of the Migration Period Department of the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest. Sadly, they have never been properly published.<sup>2</sup> Amongst them we can note trapezoidal-shaped plates with three rows of holes, two on the sides and one in the middle of the plate (Fig. 10). Unfortunately, some of these holes are no longer visible due to the poor condition of the plates. Rust covering the holes is not unusual and it can be seen in other finds of this type, even those in a much better condition, such as the above mentioned finds from the Kursk Oblast in the Russian Federation (Fig. 12). The most interesting feature that may indicate that we are dealing with lamellar cheek piece plates, is that each subsequent plate is slightly smaller than the previous one. The upper, longest edge of the plate shares the same characteristics as the Stara Zagora cheek piece plates (Fig. 11). The only difference is that in the middle of the plate there are two rather than three arched excisions (Fig. 11:b). The most significant difference between these finds and other types of plates is the occurrence of decorative excisions in the lower part of the plate. However, the appearance of a similar type on a helmet from Stara Zagora is highly likely to support the theory that the Homokmégy find is indeed a cheek piece. What is more, a fragment of one of the plates found in that grave had an almost rectangular shape with a clearly visible double row of holes, which may have been a plate connecting the cheek piece with the helmet. Based on the discussed finds and their dating, we can state that Type 2 Subtype a existed between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries (at the most). What is more, both findings come from Central Europe, so it is possible that the third finding from Central

<sup>2</sup> The authors would like to thank P. Major for a very interesting and fruitful discussion about those finds.

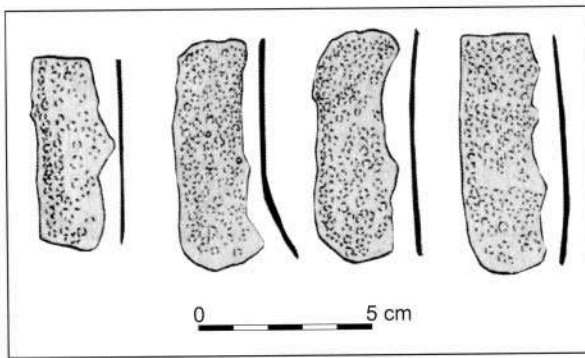


Fig. 15. Lamellar cheek piece plates (?) from the Sapogovo burial, Russian Federation (after Iliushin et al. 1992, ris. 29).

Ryc. 15. Zbrojniki lamelkowego napoliczka (?) z pochówku w Sapogowo, Federacja Rosyjska (wg Iliushin et al. 1992, ris. 29).

Europe was also related to this type of plates. In 1962 during construction works in the area around Niederstotzingen in the district of Heidenheim in Baden-Württemberg, southern Germany, thirteen graves of Germanic warriors were found. In Grave No. 12 a lamellar helmet with remains of cheek pieces was discovered (Paulsen 1967, 133-136; Werner 1973, 278-279). It is currently dated to the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century (see for example: Werner 1988, 5; Halsall 2002, 171). However, we must conclude that at the time when the reconstruction was made, Paulsen did not have any real analogies for lamellar helmets to which he could refer. Fragments of the cheek pieces visible on his reconstruction are almost identical in size. In addition, the lower part, which gave it a very specific character, seems to be an analogy for an even lower, rounded plate with a row of holes in the middle known from other lamellar cheek piece finds (Paulsen 1967, Abb. 66). It is probable that, like other findings of lamellar helmets, the helmet from Niederstotzingen was also provided with attached lamellar cheek pieces. However, this theory requires further studies.

*Subtype b.* Trapezoidal plates with two massive decorative excisions in the upper longer edge of the plate. Apart from the discussed findings from the Alaguj village and the Kursk Oblast, the authors are aware of two more findings which should be included in this group. During excavation works carried out by I. K. Kozhombardiev on the Sary-Dzhon complex (Rus. Сары-Джон) near Bishkek (Rus. Бишкек) in Kirgistan, both complete lamellar plates (Fig. 14) and their fragments were discovered. Due to the lack of analogies, they were defined as fragments of body armour (Kozhombardiev, Khudjakov 1990, ris. 1; 1996, ris. 1). Nevertheless, the finds have so far been

regarded as elements of body armour in scientific works (see for example: Kubarev 2006, Abb. 7.2-8). In correlation with the finding from the Kursk Oblast we can unequivocally state that we are dealing here with lamellar cheek pieces. What is more, it can now be stated that the defragmented plates should be reconstructed again. Findings from Sary-Dzhon were dated to the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries (ibidem, 458). The last find that probably belongs to this group comes from an early Turkic burial in Sapogovo (Rus. Сапогово) in Southern Siberia, dated to the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> century (Iliushin et al. 1992). In Kurgan 8 of the Sapogovo burial fragments of armour were found (Fig. 15), which were identified as part of body armour (ibidem, 9, ris. 29:9-16). Unfortunately, these plates were heavily corroded. There are no visible holes, but their size, the fact that they differ in size, as well as their trapezoidal shape with two visible excisions on the longer edge of each element, may indicate that we are again dealing with lamellar cheek pieces. Moreover, fragments of thin rectangular plates were found along with the plates which aroused the author's interest (ibidem, ris. 29:9-10). It is possible that there was also a lamellar helmet in Kurgan 8. However, in order to support such an idea it would be necessary to examine the remaining elements (provided that they still exist). Based on the dating of findings from Sapogovo and the Alaguj village we can state that Type 2 Subtype b is the latest and most evolved form of currently known lamellar cheek pieces, and it was used until the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. However, the limited number of known finds does not allow for a strict narrowing of the chronology. Based on the best-preserved find from the Kursk Oblast we can nevertheless state that cheek pieces in that type generally consisted of a rectangular plate connecting the cheek piece with the skull of the helmet, which had two rows of holes in its upper part and no decorative excision. A row of overlapping trapezoidal elements with three rows of holes for connecting them, had two massive decorative excisions in its upper part, the lower plate took the shape of an almost semi-oval form. Eventually, it is probable that the find from the Alaguj village is a fragment of the cheek piece of just such a form. The findings from the vicinity of the village of Alaguj, the Russian Federation, bring a lot of new information about the weapons of the peoples inhabiting the area of today's Irkutsk Region in the period of the 7<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The plate discussed above is of a special value, as it allows

to reassess a number of incorrectly interpreted finds. At the same time, it allows for a broader look at links between the development of armament

in Asia and Europe. It is to be hoped that future finds of artefacts of this type will allow for the expansion of studies in this field.

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## ZESPÓŁ ŹELAZNYCH PRZEDMIOTÓW Z ALAGUJ. PRZYCZYNEK DO DYSKUSJI NA TEMAT ROZWOJU EURAZJATYCKICH FORM LAMELKOWYCH NAPOLICZNIKÓW

Streszczenie

W ciągu ostatnich lat Uniwersytet w Nowosybirsku znalazł się w posiadaniu niezwykłej ilości zabytków archeologicznych. Doprowadziło to do utworzenia kolekcji muzealnej przy Instytucie Archeologii rzeczonyj uczelni. Pośród zdeponowanych znalezisk znajduje się zbiór militariów odnalezionych w obwodzie irkuckim nad rzeką Buguldejką, nieopodal wsi Alaguj, będącą przedmiotem powyższego studium. Składa się on z następujących zabytków: noża, dwóch strzemion, dwóch

wędzideł, 11 grotów strzał reprezentujących sześć różnych typów i płytki pancerza.

Osobną część pracy stanowi analiza ostatniego z nich, segmentu lamelkowego napolicznika, którego korelacja ze znaleziskiem z obwodu kurskiego pozwoliła na reinterpretację szeregu obiektów archeologicznych.

Bazując na analizie porównawczej grotów strzał i oporządzenia końskiego, możemy określić datowanie badanych przedmiotów na drugą połowę VII i początek VIII w.