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# 'Byzantine' and 'oriental' imports in the Merovingian Empire from the second half of the fifth to the beginning of the eighth century

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## Introduction: recent developments in 'Byzantine' finds

Interest in 'Byzantine' and/or 'Mediterranean' finds in Western Europe has increased noticeably in recent years. The material in question has usually been examined by archaeologists of the early medieval barbarian kingdoms of the Franks, Lombards, Anglo-Saxons and so on, as well as those of equestrian nomads like Huns, Avars and Bulgars, also at the periphery of the Byzantine world.<sup>1</sup> Much of this debate has taken place in the German-speaking literature, where the emphasis has been on typical 'Byzantine' small finds and their possible provenance, for example, the early Merovingian-period swords (*spathae*) with gilt handles, belt buckles and fittings, as well as helmets of the 'Baldenheim' type.<sup>2</sup>

This research has taken place against a background of an intensified interest in the archaeological study of Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine Empire. The discovery of production centres for amphorae, for example, has permitted the reconstruction of exchange patterns and discussion on the role of particular settlements and sub-regions in the Mediterranean trade-network.<sup>3</sup> The

preoccupation with Mediterranean amphorae and fine-ware has prompted a discussion about the exchange of goods and the character of the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean economy.<sup>4</sup> This has renewed the debate on the entire range of Byzantine material culture and also on problems concerning the history of individual settlements and broader landscapes both in the Mediterranean and in Western and Central Europe.<sup>5</sup> As a result, a rapidly rising quantity of archaeological material in Central and Western Europe has been identified as having an origin in the Mediterranean area and/or in the Byzantine Empire.

The purpose of this contribution is to examine a sample of this material from a critical perspective and to rethink its assumed provenance. The focus is on the eastern and northern Merovingian kingdom, although there is no claim that this comprises a complete survey of the possible Mediterranean objects identified in the region. The discussion centres on the question of which forms can be deduced at all reliably to be from the Mediterranean area and whether a provenance within the Mediterranean region can be identified. It raises the question of whether the term 'Byzantine' (as a descriptor for this material) requires a critical re-definition, and whether alternative designations for some objects would not be more meaningful. Finally, this paper turns to the problem of how Mediterranean goods may have arrived in the Frankish kingdom in the first place.

Aspects of interaction between the Early Byzantine Empire and the West are well-documented in texts and in archaeology. The imitation of Byzantine court ceremonial within the barbarian kingdoms, for example, is well-known. The attraction of the imperial court in Constantinople to elite Westerners is beyond doubt and imperial-style court ceremonies were imitated in the West

<sup>1</sup> For recent publications with an overview character, see: C. Pause, 'Die Franken und der Orient', *Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn* 2 (1996): 41-49; Cs. Bálint, 'Byzantinisches zur Herkunftsfrage des vierteiligen Gürtels', in *Kontakte zwischen Iran, Byzanz und der Steppe im 6.-7. Jahrhundert*, ed. Cs. Bálint (Varia Archaeologica Hungarica 10; Budapest, Naples and Rome, 2000), pp. 99-162; F. Daim, "'Byzantinische" Gürtelgarnituren des 8. Jahrhunderts', in *Die Awaren am Rand der byzantinischen Welt*, ed. F. Daim, (Monographien zur Frühgeschichte und Mittelalterarchäologie, 7; Innsbruck, 2000), pp. 77-204; É. Garam, 'Funde byzantinischer Herkunft in der Awarenzeit vom Ende des 6. bis zum Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts', *Monumenta Avarorum Archaeologica*, 5 (Budapest 2001); D. Quast, 'Byzantinisch-gepidische Kontakte nach 454 im Spiegel der Kleinfunde', in *International Connections of the Barbarians of the Carpathian Basin in the 1st-5th centuries A.D.*, eds. E. Istvánovits and V. Kulcsár (Konferenz Aszód, Nyíregyháza 1999; Aszód, Nyíregyháza, 2001), pp. 431-452; J. Drauschke, 'Funde ostmediterraner / byzantinischer Herkunft im merowingerzeitlichen Südwestdeutschland', *Archäologische Informationen*, 25 (2002): 151-156; A. Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West. The Archaeology of cultural identity AD 400-650* (Stroud, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> J. Werner, 'Neues zur Herkunft der frühmittelalterlichen Spanghelme vom Baldenheimer Typus', *Germania*, 66, 2 (1988): 521-528; D. Quast, 'Die merowingerzeitlichen Grabfunde aus Gültlingen' (Stadt Wildberg, Kreis Calw). (Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 52; Stuttgart, 1993); H.-W. Böhme, 'Der Frankenkönig Childerich zwischen Attila und Aëtius. Zu den Goldgriffspathen der Merowingerzeit', in *Festschrift für Otto-Herman Frey zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Dobiati (Marburger Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 16; Marburg, 1994), pp. 69-110.

<sup>3</sup> P. Reynolds, *Trade in the Western Mediterranean, AD 400-700: The ceramic evidence* (British Archaeological Reports, International Series 604; Oxford, 1995); J.-P. Sodini, 'Production et échanges dans le monde

protobyzantin (IVe-VIe s.): Le cas de céramique', in *Byzanz als Raum. Zu Methoden und Inhalten der Historischen Geographie des östlichen Mittelmeerraumes*, eds. K. Belke et al. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften 283 / Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Tabula Imperii Byzantini 7; Vienna, 2000), pp. 181-208.

<sup>4</sup> For a list of different models, see: J.-M. Carrié, 'Les échanges commerciaux et l'État antique tardif', in *Économie antique. Les échanges dans l'Antiquité: le rôle de l'État* (Entretiens d'Archéologie et d'Histoire 1; Balma, Fonsegrives, 1994), pp. 175-211.

<sup>5</sup> For a summary, see: J.-P. Sodini, 'La contribution de l'archéologie à la connaissance du monde byzantin (IVe-VIe siècles)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 139-184; A. E. Laiou (ed.), *The economic history of Byzantium. From the seventh to the fifteenth century* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 39; Washington D.C., 2002).

in order to legitimise the barbarian kings' own rule.<sup>6</sup> An *imitatio* in more everyday contexts can also be recognised in material culture terms – for example, in the fashions of female costumes and in the turned furniture in some sixth-century graves.<sup>7</sup> The adoption of Mediterranean styles also resulted, inevitably, in the imitation of Mediterranean objects as well as the importation of them.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the objects produced in the area north of the Alps would have required raw materials that were not available in Western Europe. Amongst other things, mercury was necessary for the gilding of objects and mineral soda was used in glass production until the eighth century.<sup>9</sup> At least some evidence about the goods imported into Central and Western Europe can be inferred from the written sources.<sup>10</sup> Except for a few examples (spices and textiles), the Mediterranean products known from archaeology and those known from historical sources do not overlap.

However, this contribution deals mainly with objects that derived from the Mediterranean area and/or the Byzantine

Empire and that made their way somehow to north-west Europe. They are mainly found as component parts of the furnishing of graves.

### Franks, Alamanni and 'Byzantine' imports in the early Merovingian period (fifth to sixth centuries)

We begin our discussion in the early Merovingian period, where most of the available archaeological evidence comes from the so-called 'Reihengräber', which dominate the funerary landscape from the second half of the fifth century onwards. One should bear in mind the limitations of grave-goods as evidence for reconstructing past processes; nevertheless, early Merovingian-period grave-goods are of vital importance in the debate over Byzantine influence in north-western Europe.

### *Spathae*

One of the key categories of objects thought to have a Mediterranean origin are *spathae* with gilt handles, elaborate swords with gilt handles (Fig. 1). The starting point for any discussion of their origin is Childeric's grave at Tournai, a very high-status weapons grave of the late-fifth century. Byzantine craftsmen, their Frankish pupils, Ostrogoths and Huns from southern Russia and/or Hungary were all, at some point, considered as possible producers of the swords.<sup>11</sup> Once a typology of Frankish and Alamannic *spathae* had been undertaken, however, it was generally accepted that they had been manufactured in Central Europe.<sup>12</sup> B. Arrhenius was one of the few to argue against this consensus, suggesting in her 1985 study on Merovingian garnet jewellery that the swords had a Constantinopolitan provenance. Her argument was based on the identification of a cement containing gypsum as a constituent part of the cloisonné ornaments. This, in her opinion, could only have been used in a central workshop in Constantinople.<sup>13</sup> H.W. Böhme, expanding on Arrhenius's work, then postulated a Mediterranean origin for most swords of this type. He suggested that a possible contact between Childeric and

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the events at Tours in 508: K. Hauck, 'Von einer spätantiken Randkultur zum karolingischen Europa', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967): 3-93, esp. 30-37; M. McCormick, 'Clovis at Tours, Byzantine public ritual and the origins of medieval ruler symbolism', in *Das Reich und die Barbaren*, eds. E. K. Chrysos and A. Schwarcz (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 29; Vienna and Cologne, 1989), pp. 155-180, esp. 163-171.

<sup>7</sup> H. Vierck, 'Werke des Eligius', in *Studien zur vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie. Festschrift J. Werner*, eds. G. Kossack and G. Ulbert (Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Ergänzungsband 1, II; Munich, 1974), pp. 309-380; M. Schulze, 'Einflüsse byzantinischer Prunkgewänder auf die fränkische Frauentracht', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 6 (1976): 149-161; H. Vierck, 'La "Chemise de Sainte Bathilde" à Chelles et l'influence byzantine sur l'art de cour Mérovingien au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Centenaire de l'Abbé Cochet. Kolloquium Rouen 1975* (Rouen, 1978), pp. 521-570; H. Vierck, 'Imitatio imperii und interpretatio Germanica vor der Wikingerzeit', in *Les pays du nord et Byzance (Scandinavie et Byzance). Kolloquium Uppsala 1979*, ed. R. Zeitler (Uppsala, 1981), pp. 64-113; H. Schach-Dörge, 'Imitatio imperii im Bestattungsbrauch?' *Germania* 83, 1 (2005): 127-150.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see: M. Schulze-Dörlamm, 'Byzantinische Knebelverschlüsse des frühen Mittelalters', *Germania* 80, 2 (2002): 571-594; M. Schulze-Dörlamm, 'Gleicharmige Bügelfibeln der Zeit um 600 aus dem byzantinischen Reich', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 33 (2003): 437-444.

<sup>9</sup> H. Roth, 'Handel und Gewerbe vom 6. bis 8. Jh. östlich des Rheins', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 58 (1971): 323-358, esp. 356; K.H. Wedepohl, 'Mittelalterliches Glas in Mitteleuropa: Zusammensetzung, Herstellung, Rohstoffe', (Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften Göttingen II, Mathematisch-Physikalische Klasse, 1998, 1, Göttingen, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> A. Verhulst, 'Der Handel im Merowingerreich: Gesamtdarstellung nach schriftlichen Quellen', *Antikvarisk Arkiv* 39 / *Early Medieval Studies* 2 (1970): 2-54, esp. 24; D. Schwärzel, 'Handel und Verkehr des Merowingerreiches nach den schriftlichen Quellen' (Kleine Schriften aus dem Vorgeschiedlichen Seminar Marburg 14; Marburg, 1983); D. Claude, 'Der Handel im westlichen Mittelmeer während des Frühmittelalters', *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa II. Kolloquium Göttingen 1980* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. F. 144; Göttingen, 1985), pp. 83-95.

<sup>11</sup> H. Arbmann, 'Les épées du tombeau de Childéric', *Årsberättelse* (Lund) (1947/48): 97-137, esp. 124 ff. with a summary of earlier publications.

<sup>12</sup> K. Böhner, 's. v. Childeric von Tournai III. Archäologisches', *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde IV* (Berlin and New York, 1981), pp. 441-460; I.P. Zaseckaja, 'Klassifikacija polihromnyh izdelij gunskoj epohi po stilisticeskim dannym', in *Drevnosti epohi velikogo pereselenija narodov V-VIII vekov* (Moscow, 1982), pp. 14-30; 246-248. For division into Frankish and Alamannic types, see: H. Ament, *Fränkische Adelsgräber von Flonheim in Rheinhessen* (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit B 5; Berlin, 1970), pp. 51 ff. fig. 4; W. Menghin, 'Das Schwert im frühen Mittelalter' (Wissenschaftliche Beibände zum Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums 1; Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 155 ff. (types IIIa,b and IVa-c); K. Böhner, 'Germanische Schwerter des 5./6. Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum* 34, 2 (1987): 411-490, 421 ff. (types B and C2-6); M. Martin, 'Bemerkungen zur chronologischen Gliederung der frühen Merowingerzeit', *Germania* 67, 1 (1989): 121-141, esp. 125 ff. (types B1-3).

<sup>13</sup> B. Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery. Emergence and social implications* (Stockholm, 1985), pp. 98 ff.

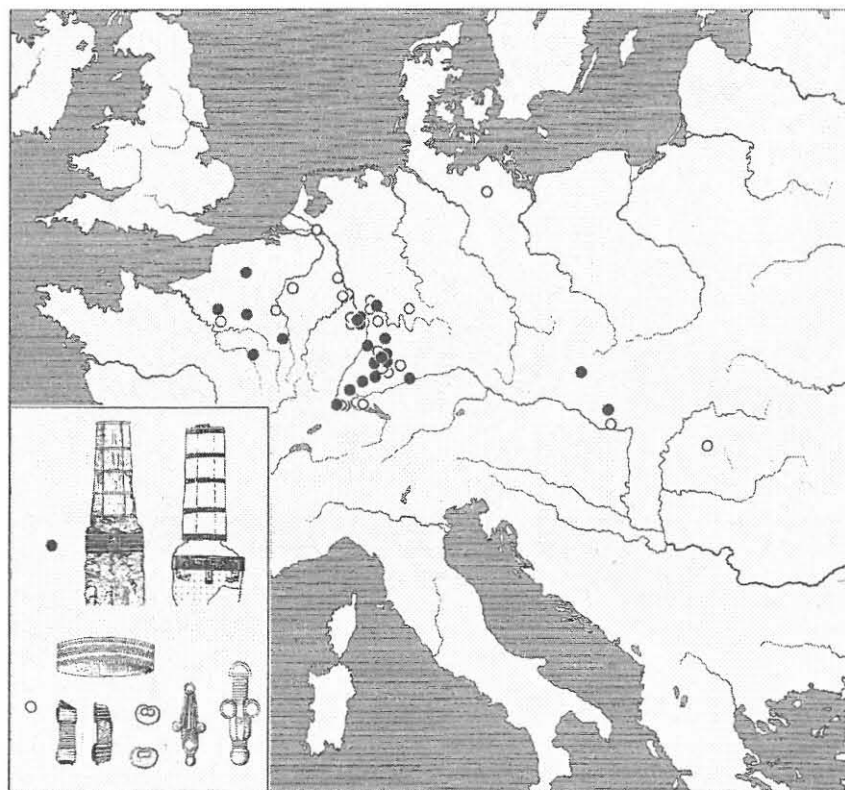


Fig. 1: Distribution of *spathae* with gilt handles and other splendour swords (after Böhme, 'Der Frankenkönig Childerich', p. 81 fig. 7 with additions).

the Byzantine Emperor of 476–477 (and arranged by Odoacer) had prompted an inflow of Mediterranean goods. Since subsidies were also being paid by the Byzantines to Gepid and other Germanic leaders, goods may also have been mediated through Central Europe.<sup>14</sup>

However, doubts about a Byzantine origin for all gilt-handled *spathae* remain. The assignment of the cloisonnés of the Childeric weapons to a workshop from Constantinople remains speculative because a workshop processing gypsum-cement could have been situated elsewhere – for example, in Italy or Carthage. Doubts have also been expressed about the assumed agreement between Childeric and the Byzantine emperor, since an alternative interpretation of the text might imply that the contract was between the Frankish leader and a Saxon noble named Adovacrius.<sup>15</sup>

P. Périn and M. Kazanski interpret the cellular cloisonné-style decoration on the weapons and further objects as a fashion of the 'barbarised military aristocracy' of the Western Roman Empire in the second half of the fifth century. They had a good reputation with Danubian barbarian kings and were sought after at the imperial court in Constantinople, but the origin of this development, they argue, is to be looked for in the

Western Mediterranean, rather than the Byzantine Empire.<sup>16</sup> Yet, while the workshops in the West should not be underestimated, some objects in the Childeric burial, for example the ornament with round garnet crystals, are analogous to those found, among other objects, in the complexes at Apahida, Olbia and Kerč. This might suggest an eastern Mediterranean origin.<sup>17</sup> Thus a Mediterranean provenance for most high-status *spathae* remains quite plausible, although manufacture in the workshops of the Byzantine Empire is under no circumstances secured.

<sup>14</sup> K. Böhner, 'Die frühmittelalterlichen Spangenhelme und die nordischen Helme der Vendelzeit', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum*, 41, 2 (1994): 471–549.

<sup>15</sup> D. Quast, 'Les Francs et l'Empire Byzantin. L'horizon des épées à poignée en or', *Les Dossiers de l'Archéologie*, 223 (1997): 56–63, esp. note 3.

<sup>16</sup> P. Périn and M. Kazanski, 'Das Grab Childerichs I', in *Die Franken – Wegbereiter Europas. Ausstellungskatalog Mannheim 1996–97*, eds. A. Wiczorek et al. (Mannheim and Mainz 1996), pp. 173–182; M. Kazanski and A. Mastykova, 'Le Caucase du Nord et la région méditerranéenne aux 5e–6e siècles', *Eurasia Antiqua* 5 (1999): 523–573, esp. 539; M. Kazanski, A. Mastykova and P. Périn, 'Byzance et les royaumes barbares d'Occident au début de l'époque mérovingienne', in *Probleme der frühen Merowingerzeit im Mitteldonaubaum*, ed. J. Tejral (XI. Internationalen Symposium 'Grundprobleme der Frühgeschichtlichen Entwicklung im Nördlichen Mitteldonaubgebiet', Kravsko 1998. Spisy Archeologického Ústavu AV CR Brno 19; Brno 2002), pp. 159–193, esp. 160.

<sup>17</sup> C. v. Carnap-Bornheim, 'Eine cloisonnierte Schnalle mit wabenförmigem Zellenwerk und Almandinrundeln aus Olbia', *Germania* 73, 1 (1995): 151–155. For a reply to the opinion of Périn and Kazanski, see: M. Schmauder, 'Die Oberschichtgräber und Verwahrfunde Südosteuropas und das Childerichgrab von Tournai. Anmerkungen zu den spätantiken Randkulturen', *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica* 30 (1998): 55–68.

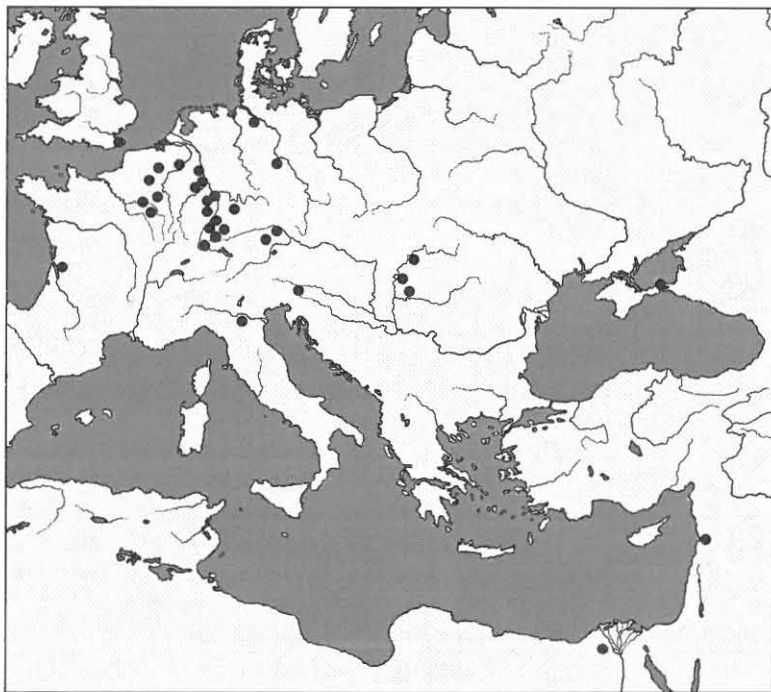


Fig. 2: Distribution of crystal buckles (after Quast 'Byzantinisch-gepidische Kontakte', p. 436 fig. 4).

**Scramasaxes**

The grave of Childeric contained not only a *spatha* with a gilt handle, but also a small, narrow *scramasax*. Scramasaxes were common in the region between the lower Danube and eastern France in the second half of the fifth century. Their development in an equestrian nomadic environment is certainly not out of question and they may have been mediated through the activities of the Huns.<sup>18</sup> There is a parallel from Sardis in Asia Minor and it is quite possible that some originate within the Byzantine Empire, particularly since the narrow small *scramasax* became part of the armament of the Byzantine army.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting that both the weapon of Childeric and the one from Sardis are classical *scramasaxes*, which occur particularly in the Transcaucasus and in Central Asia during the fourth and fifth centuries, and not in Central Europe. It is possible that the *scramasax* found in Childeric's grave originated there, and was brought to Western Europe via the Byzantine Empire. It must be distinguished from a longer, also one-edged, sword type ('sabre'), which is known more frequently from graves of the equestrian nomads in the Eurasian steppes and whose

<sup>18</sup> H. Schach-Döriges, *Das frühmittelalterliche Gräberfeld bei Aldingen am mittleren Neckar* (Materialhefte zur Archäologie in Baden-Württemberg 74; Stuttgart, 2004), p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> D. Quast, 'Auf der Suche nach fremden Männern. Die Herleitung schmaler Langsaxe vor dem Hintergrund der alamannisch-donauländischen Kontakte der zweiten Hälfte des 5. Jahrhunderts', in *Germanen beiderseits des spätantiken Limes*, eds. Th. Fischer et al. (X. Internationales Symposium 'Grundprobleme der Frühgeschichtlichen Entwicklung im Nördlichen Mitteldonauegebiet', Xanten 1997. Spisy Archeologického Ústavu AV CR Brno 14; Cologne, 1999), pp. 115-128; for their distribution see also: U. Koch, *Das alamannisch-fränkische Gräberfeld bei Pleidelsheim* (Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 60; Stuttgart, 2001) p. 279 with fig. 113 and list 31.

manufacture in Byzantine workshops cannot be assumed at present.<sup>20</sup>

**Buckles**

The literature dealing with the different types of early Merovingian belt buckles and fittings with a probable Mediterranean origin has increased enormously in recent years.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the publication of the collection of Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum Mainz by M. Schulze-Dörrlamm has introduced a new typological classification.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the state of knowledge concerning

<sup>20</sup> Kazanski, Mastykova and Périn, pp. 172 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Riegl was the first to ascribe a Mediterranean origin to the belt-buckle from Apahida: A. Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (Vienna, 1901), pp. 339 f. For other important publications on early Merovingian belt-buckles of this provenance, see: J. Werner, 'Zu den donauländischen Beziehungen des alamannischen Gräberfeldes am alten Gotterbarmweg in Basel' in *Helvetia Antiqua. Festschrift E. Vogt*, eds. R. Degen et al. (Zürich, 1966), pp. 283-292; Ament, pp. 30 f.; J. Werner, 'Archäologische Bemerkungen zu den dendrochronologischen Befunden von Oberflacht', *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 1 (1974): 650-657; V. Bierbrauer, *Die ostgotischen Grab- und Schatzfunde in Italien* (Biblioteca 'Studi Medievali' 7; Spoleto 1975), p. 160; Quast, *Die merowingerzeitlichen Grabfunde aus Gültlingen*, p. 54 and list 3; Böhme, 'Der Frankenkönig Childeric', p. 82 and list 1; M. Kazanski, 'Les plaques-boucles méditerranéennes des V<sup>e</sup>-VI<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Archéologie Médiévale* 24 (1994): 137-198; D. Quast, 'Schmuckstein- und Glasschnallen des 5. und frühen 6. Jahrhunderts aus dem östlichen Mittelmeergebiet und dem Sasanidenreich', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 26 (1996): 333-345; D. Quast, 'Garnitures des ceintures méditerranéennes à plaques cloisonnées des V<sup>e</sup> et début VI<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Antiquités Nationales* 31 (1999): 233-250; M. Herdick, 'Vom Mineral zum Prestigeobjekt. Überlegungen zur Fertigung und kulturhistorischen Bedeutung der Meerschaum- und Magnesitschnallen', *Concilium medi aevi* 3 (2000): 327-347; Quast, 'Byzantinisch-gepidische Kontakte', pp. 444-446, lists 1-3, fig. 3-6.

<sup>22</sup> M. Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen und Gürtelbeschläge im Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum I. Kataloge vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Altertümer* 30, 1 (Mainz, 2002).

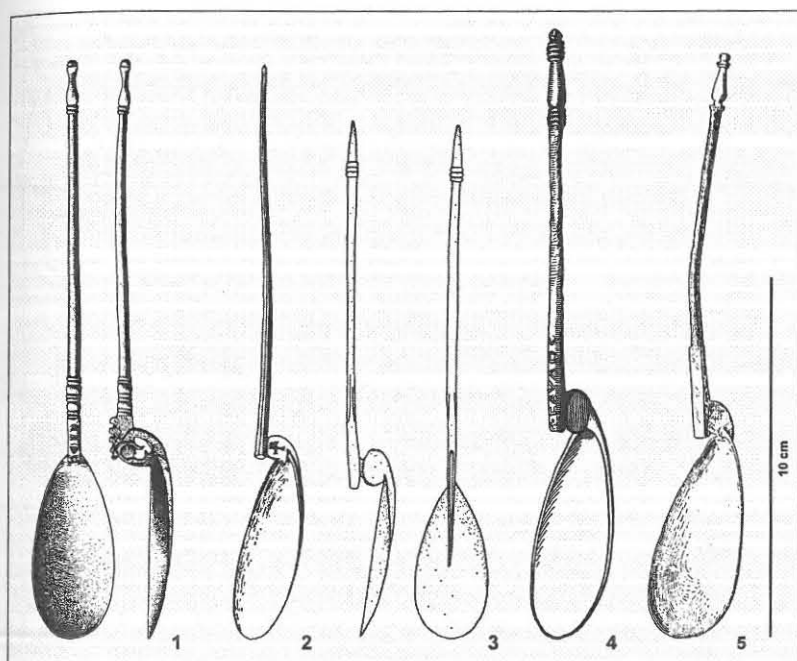


Fig. 3: Early Byzantine silver spoons of the types Isola Rizza, Desana, Barbing-Irlmauth, Lampsakos C var. 1 und 2. 1: Krefeld-Gellep (Germany) grave 1782, 2: Lausanne - Bois de Vaux (Switzerland) woman's grave, 3: Barbing-Irlmauth (Germany) grave 19, 4: Sutton Hoo (Britain) ship-burial, 5: Erfurt-Gispersleben (Germany) woman's grave (1-3.5 after Hauser, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Silberlöffel*, pl. 4a; 8a; 14a; 22c; 4 after Kitzinger, 'The Sutton Hoo ship-burial: The silver', p. 55 fig. 5).

the spectrum of Mediterranean buckles from the second half of the fifth century to the first half of the sixth century is now excellent.

Buckles found in the Frankish and Alamannic territories are usually of gold or gilded bronze with rectangular, D- or kidney-shaped fittings in cloisonné-style, buckles from sea foam (that is, *sepiolite*, a clay mineral which can be carved) and/or magnesite, crystal buckles (Fig. 2) and heart-shaped buckles, as well as few other special forms.<sup>23</sup> Like some of the gilt-handled *spathae*, it is likely that some buckles were manufactured in the western Mediterranean area, although an exact localization of the actual workshops is not yet possible.<sup>24</sup> Other buckles and fittings from the Merovingian Empire are not Mediterranean originals and must be understood as imitations, since they do not correspond typologically to the finds available from the origin areas and/or consist of iron, which did not play a role in the manufacturing process in the Mediterranean area.<sup>25</sup>

### Spoons

If the finds discussed so far originate almost exclusively from richly equipped warrior graves, then Byzantine silver spoons (*cochlearia*) are to be found also in the graves of women. In older research, a Christian and/or liturgical interpretation of the spoons dominated, but in

recent studies a secular interpretation is favoured for those pieces found north of the Alps.<sup>26</sup> The silver spoons from the regions north and west of the Alps – mainly types Isola Rizza, Desana, Barbing Irlmauth and Lampsakos C (Fig. 3)<sup>27</sup> – were found, insofar as they have a context, in very richly furnished burials. These can be dated, with a few exceptions, to around 500. In the Mediterranean area, by contrast, especially in northern Italy, they are primarily known as components of treasure

<sup>26</sup> E. Kitzinger, 'The Sutton Hoo ship-burial: The silver', *Antiquity* 14, 53 (1940): 40-63, esp. 59 f.; H. Dannheimer, 'Silberlöffel aus Reihengräbern', *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* 30 (1965): 278; H. v. Petrikovits, 'Frühchristliche Silberlöffel', in *Corolla memoriae Erich Swoboda dedicata* (Römische Forschungen in Niederösterreich 5; Graz and Cologne, 1966), pp. 173-182; V. Milojević, 'Zu den spät-kaiserzeitlichen und merowingischen Silberlöffeln. Mit einem Beitrag von Hermann Vetters', *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 49 (1968): 111-152, esp. 122 ff. For 'secular' interpretations, see: H.W. Böhme, 'Löffelbeigabe in spät-römischen Gräbern nördlich der Alpen', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums* 17 (1970): 172-200, esp. 189 f.; Bierbrauer, *Die ostgotischen Grab- und Schatzfunde in Italien*, pp. 184 ff.; M. Martin, 'Esslöffel/Weinsiebchen und Toilettgerät', in *Der spät-römische Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst*, eds. H.A. Cahn and A. Kaufmann-Heinmann (Basler Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte 9; Derendingen, 1984), pp. 55-132, 92; S.R. Hauser, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Silberlöffel* (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 19; Münster, 1992), pp. 82 ff.

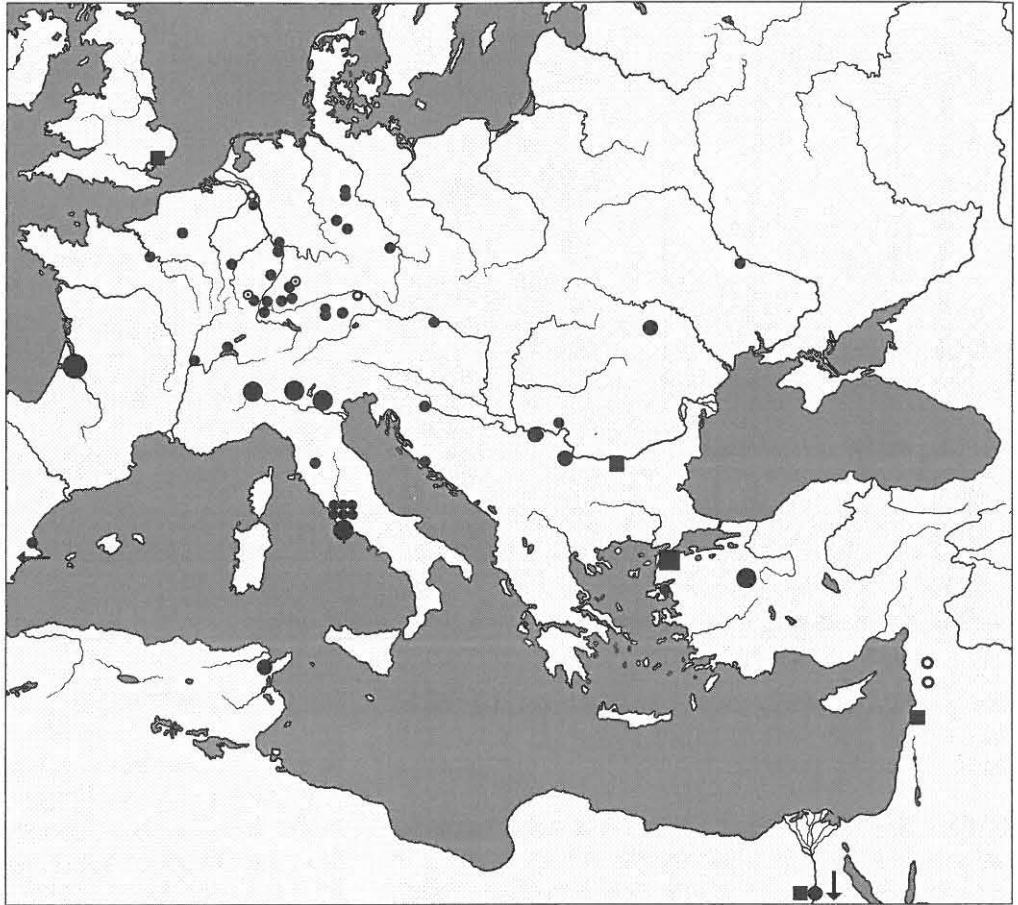
<sup>27</sup> Hauser, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Silberlöffel*. Some new finds must be added to his catalogue. These are: Eltville a. Rhein, Rheingau-Taunus-Kreis (Hessen, Germany): Böhme, 'Löffelbeigabe in spät-römischen Gräbern nördlich der Alpen', p. 195, list IV. Mainz-Hechtsheim (Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany): A. Wiczorek et al. (eds.), *Die Franken – Wegbereiter Europas* (Ausstellungskatalog Mannheim 1996-97; Mannheim and Mainz 1996), p. 1025 with fig. Niedernai, Dép. Bas-Rhin (France): M. Zehnacker, 'Niedernai – Une necropole du 5 et 6 siècle après J.C. Fouilles recentes 4', in *À l'aube du Moyen Age: l'Alsace mérovingienne*, ed. B. Schnitzler (Les collections du Musée Archéologique 5; Strasbourg, 1997), pp. 89-137, esp. 114-118 fig. 9 f. Prittlewell, Essex (Great Britain): Museum of London Archaeology Service, *The Prittlewell Prince. The discovery of a rich Anglo-Saxon burial in Essex* (London, 2004), pp. 28 f. fig. p. 29 and 40.

<sup>23</sup> Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen und Gürtelbeschläge*; Werner, 'Archäologische Bemerkungen', pp. 650 ff.; D. Quast, 'Ein byzantinischer Gürtelbeschlag der Zeit um 500 aus Weingarten (Lkr. Ravensburg) Grab 189', *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 21 (1996): 527-539.

<sup>24</sup> For example, see: Kazanski, pp. 150 f. types I.3.K, pl. 11,18; 23,5.

<sup>25</sup> Drauschke, 'Funde ostmediterranean/byzantinischer Herkunft im merowingischen Südwestdeutschland', p. 152; Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen und Gürtelbeschläge*, p. 2, note 47 and 142.

Fig. 4: Distribution of early Byzantine silver spoons in the West around 500 AD. (●) Italic or western Balkan, (■) eastern Mediterranean and (○) uncertain origin, (◎) Late Antique residual finds (arranged after Hauser, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Silberlöffel*, 145-146 distribution map 2-3 with additions)



troves and/or church treasures. Nearly all *cochlearia* found north and west of the Alps are thought, as a result of the careful analysis of S. Hauser, to be either of Italian or western Balkan origin (Fig. 4), or to have been produced in a Late Roman context and in a provincial workshop.<sup>28</sup> There are, in addition, a few spoons of uncertain origin.

### Helmets

With helmets (and the remaining categories of object in this section), we are no longer concerned with objects found exclusively in fifth and early-sixth century graves, but with objects that are also found in later Merovingian contexts. Again, a variety of origins has been suggested for some of them. Helmets of the Baldenheim type, for example, had been seen as western Asiatic, Coptic, Italic-Ostrogothic and purely Frankish, until J. Werner addressed them as Byzantine officer helmets in view of new finds from the destruction layers of early Byzantine cities on the Balkans. He favoured a Byzantine provenance for the majority of these helmets, suggesting that they were perhaps even manufactured in central

*fabricae* in Constantinople.<sup>29</sup> D. Quast argued in support of this interpretation and came to the conclusion that all helmets of the Baldenheim type originated from Byzantine workshops.<sup>30</sup>

However, these arguments have now been challenged. After K. Böhner had already distinguished between a western and eastern type of helmet, F. Stein divided the well-known examples into five different groups (Fig. 5), arguing that only the first three groups were connected with Byzantine workshops in the East.<sup>31</sup> She suggested that the fifth group, which includes four helmets from Central Europe, could have been manufactured in Italy. In another recent analysis of the helmets, M. Vogt allocated individual helmets to workshops and located production both in Italy and in the Byzantine Empire.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Werner, 'Neues zur Herkunft der frühmittelalterlichen Spangenhelme vom Baldenheimer Typus', pp. 523 ff. For previous interpretations, see: Quast, *Die merowingerzeitlichen Grabfunde aus Gültlingen*, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Quast, *Die merowingerzeitlichen Grabfunde aus Gültlingen*, pp. 36 ff. and 131 list 2.

<sup>31</sup> Böhner, 'Die frühmittelalterlichen Spangenhelme und die nordischen Helme der Vendelzeit', pp. 527 f. F. Stein, 'Die Spangenhelme von Pfeffingen und Gammertingen – Überlegungen zur Bestimmung ihrer Herstellungsräume', *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica* 35 (2003): 41-61, esp. 45 ff.

<sup>32</sup> M. Vogt, 'Die frühmittelalterlichen Spangenhelme – Ein Überblick zu archäologischen, kunsthistorischen und herstellungstechnischen Problemen', *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica* 35 (2003): 9-29, esp.

<sup>28</sup> Hauser, *Löffelbeigabe in spätrömischen Gräbern nördlich der Alpen*.



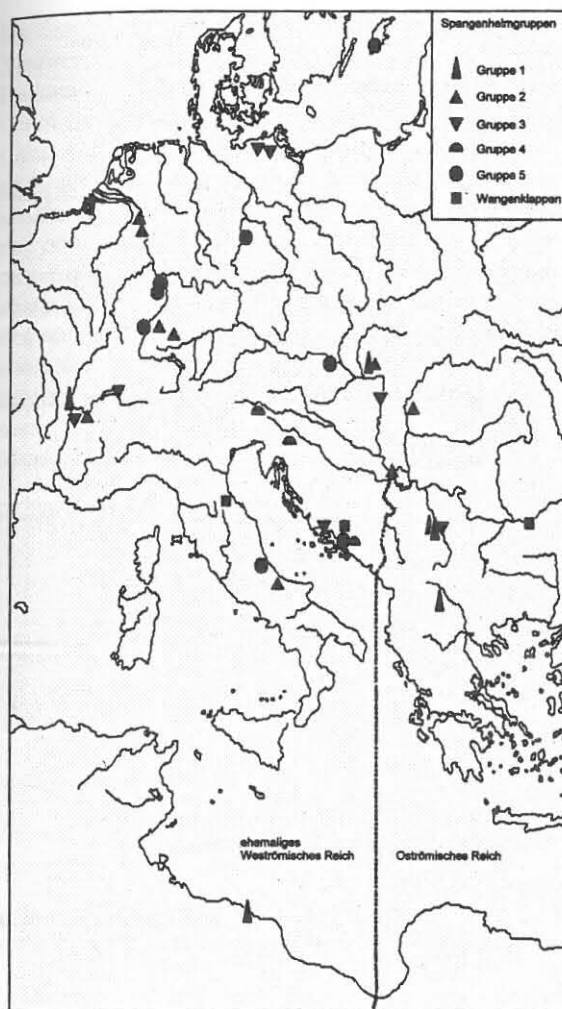


Fig. 5: Distribution of the different groups of helmets of the 'Baldenheim' type (after Stein 'Die Spangenhelme von Pfeffingen und Gammertingen', p. 52 fig. 11).

## Textiles

Unsurprisingly, textiles do not occur very frequently in the archaeological record, although some rare examples of silk imports are still extant.<sup>33</sup> Fifth- to seventh-century Byzantine workshops were heavily influenced by Sasanian fashions, particularly in relation to design and colours. As a result, it is almost impossible to differentiate between the products of either country.<sup>34</sup>

25; for a recent catalogue, see also: Quast, 'Byzantinisch-gepidische Kontakte nach 454 im Spiegel der Kleinfunde', p. 446, list 4.

<sup>33</sup> For example grave 974, Lauchheim, Ostalbkreis (Baden-Württemberg, Germany): I. Stork, 'Lauchheim, Ostalbkreis 1994 - frühe Phasen des großen Gräberfelds der Merowingerzeit', *Archäologische Ausgrabungen in Baden-Württemberg* (1994): pp. 212-216; J. Banck-Burgess, 'An Webstuhl und Webrahmen. Alamannisches Textilhandwerk', in *Die Alamannen* (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 371-378; J. Banck, 'Ein merowingerzeitlicher Baumsarg aus Lauchheim/Ostalbkreis - Zur Bergung und Dokumentation der Textilfunde', in *Textiles in European archaeology. 6th NESAT Symposium Borås 1996*, eds. L. Bender Jörgensen and Ch. Rinaldo (GOTARC Ser. A 1; Göteborg, 1998), pp. 115-124.

<sup>34</sup> H. Roth, 'Seidenstoffe des 4. bis 9. Jh. in Westeuropa', in *Geld aus China. Ausstellung Bonn 1982* (Kunst und Altertum am Rhein 108;

## Plant-remains

Again, this is a difficult category to detect archaeologically. One example of botanical evidence for exotic plants has recently been identified in the form of incense from Schaffhausen (Switzerland), but this is very rare indeed.<sup>35</sup>

## Glass vessels

Byzantine glass vessels are also extremely rare in early Merovingian-period contexts. An outstanding, unique piece is the flask from grave 51 of Bräunlingen (Germany) that can be dated to the third quarter of the fifth century.<sup>36</sup> This, just under 40 cm tall, narrow glass flask with a ribbed surface can be compared quite convincingly with Syrian glass vessels, and there are also similar pieces from the northern Caucasus.<sup>37</sup> An eastern Mediterranean origin for these flasks is very probable.

## Ivory combs

Two fragments of Mediterranean ivory combs, excavated from grave 150 at Fridingen (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) and grave 285 from Griesheim (Hessen, Germany) are almost certainly Mediterranean products of the fifth to early-sixth centuries.<sup>38</sup> It is likely that they

Cologne and Bonn, 1982), pp. 110-115; X. Liu, *Silk and religion. An exploration of material life and the thought of people, AD 600-1200* (Delhi, 1996), p. 21; A. Muthesius, 'Essential processes, looms, and technical aspects of the production of silk textiles', in *The economic history of Byzantium. From the seventh to the fifteenth century*, ed. A. Laiou (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 39; Washington D.C., 2002), pp. 147-168.

<sup>35</sup> Graves 626, 752 and 789 from Schleithem, Kt. Schaffhausen (Switzerland). A. Burzler et al., *Das frühmittelalterliche Schleithem - Siedlung, Gräberfeld und Kirche* (Schaffhauser Archäologie 5; Schaffhausen, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> G. Fingerlin, 'Bräunlingen, ein frühmerowingerzeitlicher Adelssitz an der Römerstraße durch den südlichen Schwarzwald', *Archäologische Ausgrabungen in Baden-Württemberg* (1997): pp. 146-148; A. Wiczorek and P. Périn (eds.), *Das Gold der Barbarenfürsten* (Ausstellungskatalog Mannheim 2001, Publikationen des Reiss-Museums 3; Stuttgart, 2001), p. 170, no. 4.15.

<sup>37</sup> E.M. Ruprechtsberger (ed.), *Syrien. Von den Aposteln zu den Kalifen. Ausstellungskatalog Linz, Schloss Schallaburg, Klagenfurt 1993-95* (Linz Archäologische Forschungen 21; Linz, 1993), p. 399 no. 12; Kazanski and Mastikova, p. 560, fig. 22,5; 563 fig. 24,11 (Djurso grave 259, Sopino grave 11). I would like to thank M. Kazanski for this and other information.

<sup>38</sup> A. v. Schnurbein, *Der alamannische Friedhof bei Fridingen an der Donau (Kreis Tuttlingen)* (Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 21; Stuttgart, 1987), pp. 136 f. pl. 32-34A; J. Meiner, 'Die Hochzeit zu Kana und der Hauptmann von Kafarnaum. Ein frühchristlicher Elfenbeinkamm aus Griesheim (Hessen)', *Antike Welt* 27, 5 (1996): 387-396; H. Göldner and V. Hilberg, *Griesheim, Kreis Darmstadt-Dieburg, Gräberfeld des 6. bis 8. Jahrhunderts. Ausgrabungen in dem merowinger- bis karolingerzeitlichen Reihengräberfriedhof "An der Rückgasse"* (Archäologische Denkmäler in Hessen 1; 2. Auflage, Wiesbaden, 2000), p. 12.

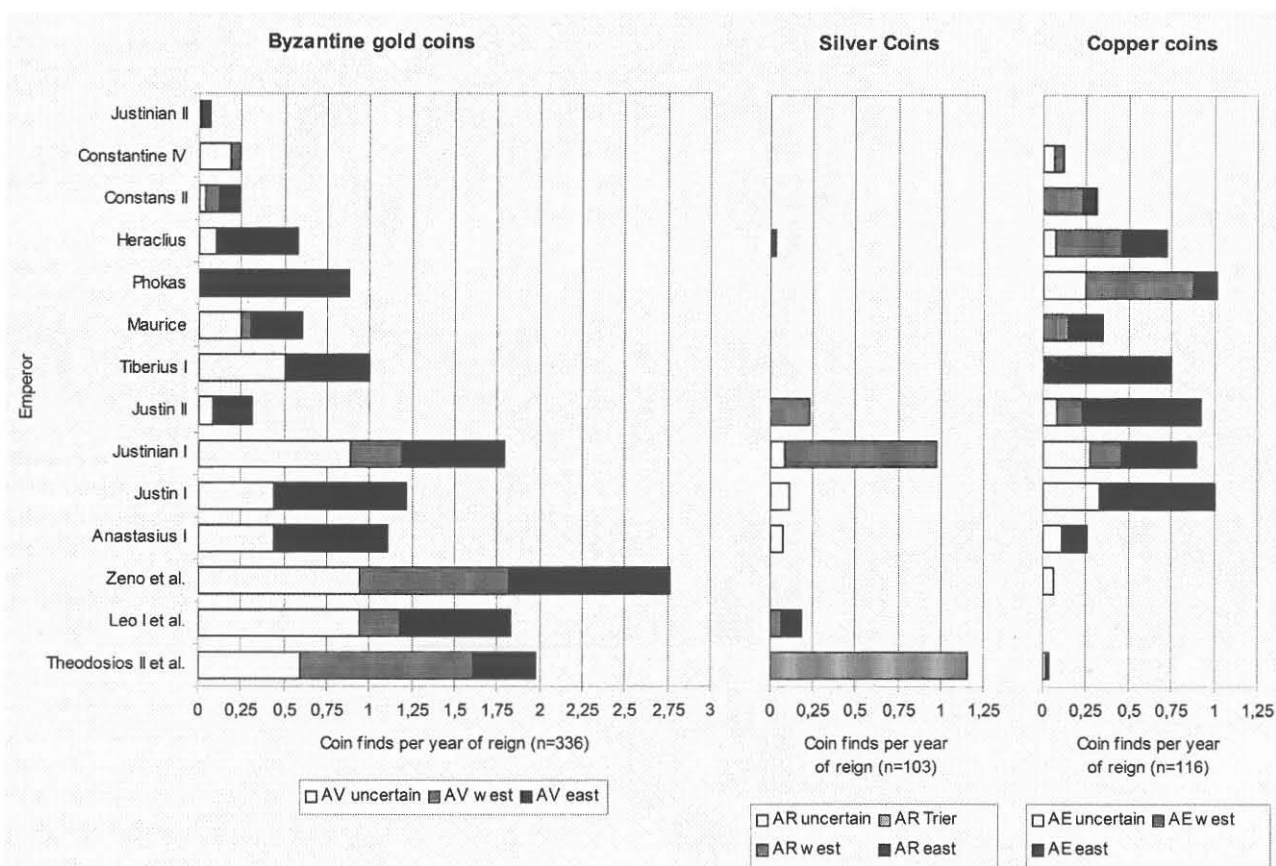


Fig. 6: Diagram showing the frequency of imperial Byzantine coins in the area of the Merovingian Kingdom, sorted in accordance with metal and mints in the eastern and western part of the empire. Deposits and coins from the Childeric-grave are not included.

were manufactured in eastern Mediterranean workshops.<sup>39</sup>

### Coins

Finally, the coins of the Byzantine Empire must be included in this discussion. It is helpful in this to examine the number of issues from Mediterranean mints in diachronic perspective (Fig. 6), taking the total number of coins per Emperor and dividing by the number of years in that Emperor's reign, taking into account the regnal years the coins were minted in. This shows that there is a high proportion of Byzantine gold coins dating to the period before the end of Zeno's reign (474-491), perhaps suggesting some continuation in administrative structures. Thereafter, the flow of Byzantine gold coins into the Merovingian kingdoms strongly decreases.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, by the reign of Anastasius I, increased numbers of copper coins made their way into the Merovingian world, where they may have been used as currency. On this point, we must bear in mind that most of the gold

coins were found in contexts where they had been deposited as jewellery or used as *obolus* within the graves, and so their presence cannot be read as evidence for the use of these coins as currency. Notwithstanding, these difficulties, the finds have the potential to illuminate the general tendencies of Byzantine minting and to shed light on Merovingian contacts with the Byzantine world.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, a detailed analysis of the apparently 'Byzantine' objects found in the Merovingian kingdom in the fifth and early-sixth centuries shows that the number of objects that can be demonstrated to have been actually manufactured in the eastern Mediterranean region and exported into the north and west is substantially smaller than one might assume on the basis of some of the literature available. In fact, the present state of the field suggests that many of apparently *eastern*

<sup>39</sup> For parallels, see: W.F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters* (Kataloge vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Altertümer 7; 3. Auflage Mainz, 1976), pp. 122 f. no. 202-205 pl. 98 f.

<sup>40</sup> The coinage of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy is not included in the analysis. See now: M.A. Metlich, *The coinage of Ostrogothic Italy* (London, 2004).

<sup>41</sup> See, for comparison: W. Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini 1-3* (Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 109; 119; 148 / Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission 1; 4; 10; Vienna 1973; 1975; 1981); Ph. Grierson, *Byzantine coins* (Los Angeles, 1982); M.F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy c. 300-1450* (Cambridge, 1985); C. Morrisson, 'Byzantine money: its production and circulation', in *The economic history of Byzantium* ed. A. Laiou (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 39; Washington D.C. 2002), pp. 909-966.

Mediterranean objects might well originate in the western Mediterranean area (that is, Italy and/or the western Balkans). So, the notion of direct contacts between the Germanic leaders in the West and the Emperor in Constantinople receives little support in the archaeological evidence – or in the written sources, insofar as diplomatic legations between the empires are not often recorded.<sup>42</sup> Incidentally, this situation puts the eastern Mediterranean pottery evidence from Britain into sharp relief, for analogous pottery only reached Lyon (for example) (Fig. 7) as late as the sixth and seventh centuries, whereas in Britain it is found in fifth and sixth century contexts.<sup>43</sup> As we shall now see, different factors seem to have been at work in the second part of the Merovingian period.

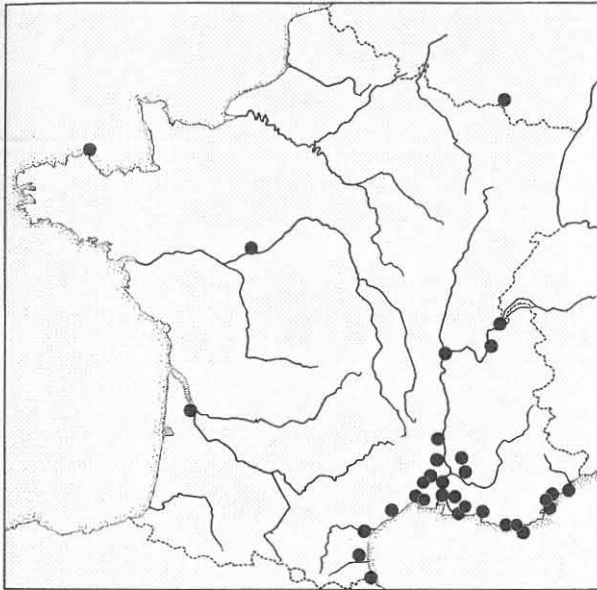


Fig. 7: Find spots of Eastern Mediterranean amphorae in Gaul, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century (after Bonifay/Villedieu 1989, 41, fig. 17.)

## Sixth- and seventh-century 'Byzantine' finds in the Merovingian Empire

### Coins

After c. 530, the range and distribution of 'Byzantine' finds in the Merovingian kingdom alters substantially. Byzantine coins are well represented in the archaeological record (Fig. 6), although their quantity

decreases after an absolute high point under Justinian I – mainly *siliquae* of Italian mints, which are found almost exclusively in the Austrasian part of the Frankish kingdom – until the last coinages of Justinian II (685-695/705-711).<sup>44</sup> The enormous output of coins under Justinian I is reflected in the Byzantine archaeological record, as is the concomitant decline in coinage in the seventh century, and so the Merovingian finds seem to reflect this same pattern.

### Buckles

'Byzantine' buckles continue to be found in Merovingian contexts in the second part of our period. Much work has been undertaken on this assemblage and, like those buckles found in earlier Merovingian contexts, they have no single point of origin. One can find examples which almost certainly originate in the eastern Mediterranean area, examples which can be connected with workshops in Pannonia, the Balkans, Italy and/or the western Mediterranean, as well as examples which represent local imitations of imported buckles.

A detailed look at a few examples from Austrasia starts to bring clarity to this picture. A group of belt-buckles with firmly-executed, partly pierced-work fittings can now be dated primarily to the second third of the sixth century with a few later examples.<sup>45</sup> For most of these, parallels can be found in the Mediterranean area, mainly in Italy and/or Spain, although there are also a few parallels from further east, at sites in Slovenia and Hungary. It would seem that the western, rather than eastern, Mediterranean area must be seen as the point of origin for most of these buckles, primarily Italy and/or the Adriatic area.<sup>46</sup> Experiments on two buckles from the cemetery of Bopfingen, Ostalbkreis (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) appear to confirm this, suggesting that it was likely that Ossia-Sepia shells were used as moulds.<sup>47</sup>

'Sucidava'-type buckles (after J. Werner and/or D1 after M. Schulze-Dörrlamm) also belong to the sixth century.

<sup>42</sup> G. Wolf, 'Fränkisch-byzantinische Gesandtschaften vom 5. bis 8. Jahrhundert und die Rolle des Papsttums im 8. Jahrhundert', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 37 (1991): 1-13.

<sup>43</sup> Britain: Harris, pp. 143 ff. fig. 44; M. Bonifay and F. Villedieu, 'Importations d'amphores orientales en Gaule (V<sup>e</sup>-VII<sup>e</sup> siècles)', in *Recherches sur la céramique byzantine.*, eds. V. Déroche and J.-M. Spieser (Kolloquium Athen 1987; Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, Suppl. 18; Athens, 1989), pp. 17-46; C. Citter et al., 'Commerci nel Mediterraneo occidentale nell'Alto Medioevo', in *Early Medieval towns in the western Mediterranean. Kongress Ravello 1994*, ed. G. P. Brogiolo (Documenti di archeologia 10; Mantova, 1996), pp. 121-137.

<sup>44</sup> J. Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk – Studien zur Distribution von Waren im östlichen Merowingerreich des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts anhand orientalischer und lokaler Produkte* (Unveröffentlichte Dissertation Freiburg, 2005), p. 117; similar in the Avaria: P. Somogyi, *Byzantinische Fundmünzen der Awarenzeit* (Monographien zur Frühgeschichte und Mittelalterarchäologie 5; Innsbruck, 1997). I would like to thank J. F. Fischer for permission to use the catalogue of his unpublished PhD thesis on coins in the Merovingian Empire.

<sup>45</sup> G. Fingerlin, 'Eine Schnalle mediterraner Form aus dem Reichengräberfeld von Güttingen, Ldkrs. Konstanz', *Badische Fundberichte*, 23 (1967): pp. 159-187.

<sup>46</sup> New finds: J. Boube, 'Éléments de ceinturon wisigothiques et byzantins trouvés au Maroc', *Bulletin d'Archéologie Marocaine* 15 (1983/84): 281-296, esp. 284-288 pl. I. 1-2; E. Riemer, 'Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen aus der Sammlung Diergardt im Römisch-Germanischen Museum Köln', *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 28 (1995): 777-809, esp. 791 ff.

<sup>47</sup> R.-D. Blumer and M. Knaut, 'Zum Edelmetallguß in Ossia-Sepia-Formen im Frühmittelalter', *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 16 (1991): 545-553.

The distribution of these buckles in the western Merovingian kingdom has not changed radically since their first mapping, and M. Schulze Schulze-Dörrlamm's distribution maps indicate that, in total, only eight examples have been found here. Individual finds are now also known in southern France, northern Italy and Asia Minor, but the numerous new finds in the lower Danube area suggests that this was their main area of circulation. It is not clear where they were produced, but the north-eastern Mediterranean area and the lower Danube region remain strong possibilities.<sup>48</sup>

'Syracus' buckles (after J. Werner and/or D12 after M. Schulze-Dörrlamm) are dated from the late-sixth to the middle and/or the third quarter of the seventh century and have a distribution with a different centre of gravity. They are unknown in France and there are only isolated finds in the lower Danube region. There is, however, a more intensive distribution in south-eastern England, Spain, Italy and the northern Adriatic, North Africa and Egypt, as well as Asia Minor, Greece, and on the Crimea.<sup>49</sup> Not all buckles of the Syracus type can be attributed to eastern Mediterranean workshops: on the contrary, some variants seem to be of a western Mediterranean origin.<sup>50</sup>

Other buckle forms which have sometimes been described as 'Byzantine' are found predominantly in the area of the north-west Balkans,<sup>51</sup> but it is more appropriate to characterize these as representatives of the 'Pannonian' types Pécs, Nagyarsány and Boly Želovce.<sup>52</sup> It is negligible, of course, to ask whether workshops on the border with the Byzantine Empire were responsible for their production or whether the craftsmen remained in Pannonia, and continued to work under the

new Avar rulers.<sup>53</sup> One such example is the bronze buckle found in grave 114B at Harting (Bavaria, Germany). This is a Boly Želovce-type buckle – its pierced-work fitting can be compared with examples from Pécs-Gyárvaros and Keszthely.<sup>54</sup>

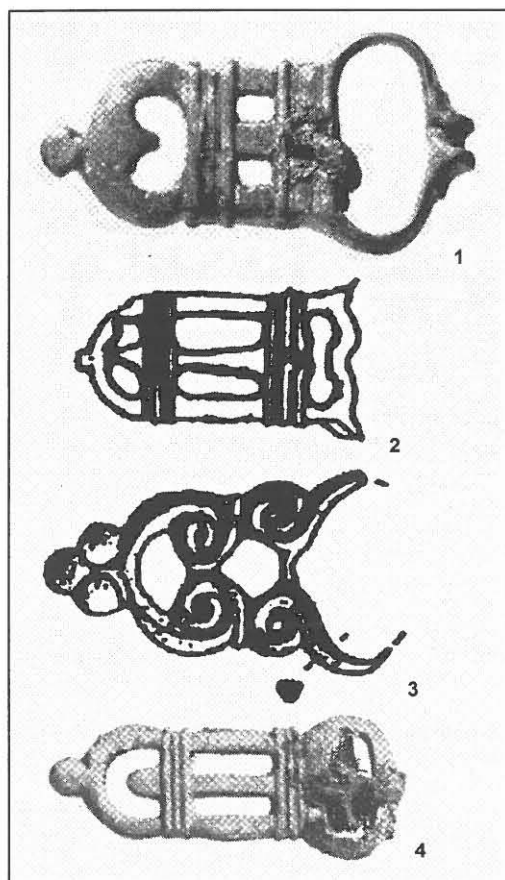


Fig. 8: 'Pannonian-byzantine' buckles from the Bavarian region:

1. Linz-Zizlau (Austria) grave 151 (Ladenbauer-Orel, *Linz-Zizlau – Das baierische Gräberfeld an der Traunmündung*, pl. 29), 2: Feldkirchen (Germany) grave 35, 3: Salzburghofen (Germany) grave 178 (Knöchlein, *Studien zur Archäologie der Merowingerzeit im Rupertwinkel*, pl. 20A,2; 36A,2), 4: Weihmörting (Germany) grave 91 (Zeiß, 'Das Reihengräberfeld von Weihmörting', pl. 4,16).

Grave 151 at Linz-Zizlau (Oberösterreich, Austria) yielded a bronze belt-buckle with firm pierced-work (Fig. 8.1), which has been classified as a Pécs-type buckle<sup>55</sup>, and there are analogous buckles from Salzburg-Liefering (Austria)<sup>56</sup>, from grave 35 at Feldkirchen (Bavaria, Germany)<sup>57</sup> as well as from grave 91 at Weihmörting

<sup>48</sup> J. Werner, 'Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts aus der Sammlung Diergardt', *Kölner Jahrbuch für Ur- und Frühgeschichte* 1 (1955): 36-48, esp. 37 and map I; Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen und Gürtelbeschlüge*, pp. 146-151 fig. 54.

<sup>49</sup> Werner, 'Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts aus der Sammlung Diergardt', p. 36 fig. 2, map I; Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen und Gürtelbeschlüge*, pp. 171-179 fig. 62. Recent collection: M. Kadioğlu and Ph. v. Rummel, 'Frühbyzantinische Bronzefunde aus dem Theater von Nysa am Mäander', *Anadolu / Anatolia* 24, (2003): 103-114, esp. 110-113, list 1, fig. 13. New finds can be added from Kalavassos (*Kopetra*), Cyprus: M. Rautmann, *A Cypriot village of Late Antiquity. Kalavassos-Kopetra in the Vasiliskos Valley* (Journal of Roman Archaeology, Suppl. Ser. 52; Portsmouth, 2003), p. 108 no. II-19-1, fig. 3.41; and also from Poland: M. Wołoszyn, 'Die byzantinischen Fundstücke in Polen. Ausgewählte Probleme', in *Byzantium and East Central Europe*, eds. G. Prinzing and M. Salamon (Symposium Krakau 2000. Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia 3; Kraków, 2001), pp. 49-59, esp. 52 f. fig. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ch. Eger, 'Eine byzantinische Gürtelschnalle von der Krim in der Sammlung des Hamburger Museums für Archäologie', in *Materiali po arheologii Istorii i Etnografii Taurii V* (Simferopol, 1996), pp. 343-348.

<sup>51</sup> D. Csallány, 'Les monuments de l'industrie byzantine des métaux II', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 4 (1956): 261-291.

<sup>52</sup> V. Varsik, 'Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen im mittleren und unteren Donaauraum im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert', *Slovenská Archeológia* 40, 1 (1992): 77-108; U. Ibler, 'Pannonische Gürtelschnallen des späten 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts', *Arheološki Vestnik* 43 (1992): 135-148.

<sup>53</sup> Garam, p. 108; Ibler, 'Pannonische Gürtelschnallen', p. 138.

<sup>54</sup> E. Wintergerst, *Neue reihengräberzeitliche Funde aus der Umgebung von Regensburg* (Dissertation, University of Bamberg, 1996), pp. 69-70 pl. 34.3. Ibler, 'Pannonische Gürtelschnallen', fig. 3.3.16.

<sup>55</sup> H. Ladenbauer-Orel, *Linz-Zizlau - Das baierische Gräberfeld an der Traunmündung* (Vienna and Munich, 1960), p. 60, pl. 15.

<sup>56</sup> Ibler, 'Pannonische Gürtelschnallen', p. 145 no. 13.

<sup>57</sup> R. Knöchlein, *Studien zur Archäologie der Merowingerzeit im Rupertwinkel* (Dissertation, University of Munich, 1991), pl. 36A.2.

(Bavaria, Germany) (Fig. 8.2.4).<sup>58</sup> The best parallels for the bronze buckle with firm, pierced-work fitting from grave 178 of Salzburghofen (Bavaria, Germany)<sup>59</sup> (Fig. 8.3) can be seen amongst the range of the Nagyharsány-type buckles – for example, those from Kruje or Gyód.<sup>60</sup> A very similar buckle was recently discovered in grave 205 at Straubing-Alburg (Bavaria, Germany).<sup>61</sup> Altogether, 'Pannonian' buckles are concentrated more strongly in the southeastern-most region of the Merovingian Empire (that is, Bavaria), which is not surprising, in view of its proximity to the area of their apparent manufacture.

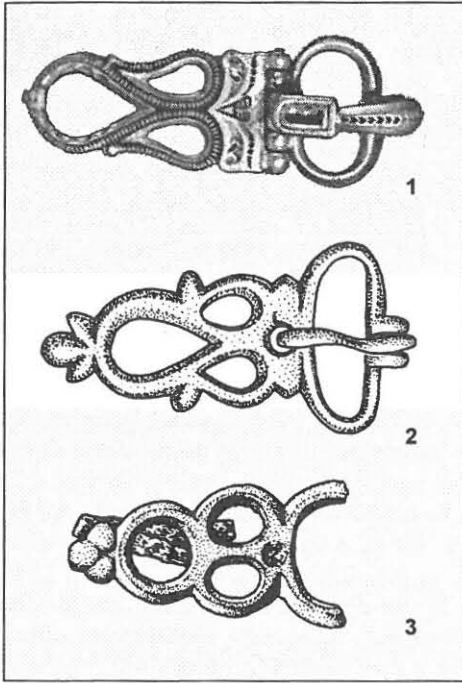


Fig. 9. 1: Golden buckle from the treasure of Mytilene (Lesbos/Greece) (Yeroulanou, 'Jewellery in the Byzantine World', p. 290 fig. 207); 9.2: Bronze buckle from Pécs (Hungary) grave 7 (Garam, pl. 64,6); 9.3: Bronze buckle from Aubing, city of Munich (Germany) grave 657 (Dannheimer, *Das baiuwarische Reihengräberfeld von Aubing, Stadt München*, pl. 67,15).

Various imitation 'Byzantine' buckles have been found in the region north of the Alps. These include square double-buckles and buckles of the type Syracuse/D 12.<sup>62</sup> It

would seem that knowledge of Byzantine forms was spreading into Central and Western Europe in the early sixth century. Interestingly, this can be reconstructed with the help of a different type of buckle: one pierced-work gold buckle was found in the treasure trove of Mytilene on Lesbos (Fig. 9.1).<sup>63</sup> Almost identical pieces are also known from Avar sites (Fig. 9.2) – some of these are produced on a larger scale and some are simple bronze buckles.<sup>64</sup> Both can be described as 'Nagyharsány'-type buckles. Finally, in the west of the region, there are more imitation 'Byzantine' buckles, which G. Zeller categorised as 'Schwabsburg'-type.<sup>65</sup> Some of these can be further classified into a type that is an imitation of the 'Pannonian' type, 'Nagyharsány' (Fig. 9.3).<sup>66</sup>

More examples could be cited here, and a discussion of the origin and distribution of belt sets would be a useful line of further research. However, on the basis of the above analysis it is already clear that it is far too simplistic to refer simply to 'Byzantine' buckles, for they are likely to derive from several different geographical regions.<sup>67</sup> Yet, it is also clear that there *are* imported buckles from the Mediterranean area and the Byzantine world, in particular. Sites in the eastern Merovingian kingdom are more likely to show these connections than sites in the western part of the kingdom.<sup>68</sup>

von Aubing, *Stadt München* (Monographien der Prähistorischen Staatssammlung München 1; Stuttgart, 1998), p. 102, pl. 19B.6.

<sup>63</sup> A. Yeroulanou, 'Jewellery in the Byzantine World', in *Greek Jewellery from the Benaki Museum Collections* ed. E. Georgoula (Athens, 1999), pp. 280-295, esp. 290 fig. 207.

<sup>64</sup> Garam, pl. 64; 65, 1-4.

<sup>65</sup> G. Zeller, 'Das fränkische Gräberfeld von Hahnheim', *Mainzer Zeitschrift* 67/68 (1972/73): 330-367, esp. 341 f., note 77.

<sup>66</sup> Dillingen (Bavaria, Germany): Th. Kersting, *Besiedlungsgeschichte des frühen Mittelalters im nördlichen Bayerisch-Schwaben* (Beiträge zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas 24; Weissbach, 2000), pp. 37-38 pl. 17A.6. Östringen-Odenheim (Baden-Württemberg, Germany), grave 8: *Badische Fundberichte* 17 (1941-47), pl. 89,9. München-Aubing (Bavaria, Germany) grave 657: Dannheimer, *Das baiuwarische Reihengräberfeld von Aubing, Stadt München*, p. 166 pl. 67. Mannheim-Straßenheim (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) grave 84: (pers. comm. Dr. U. Koch). Eltville (Hessen, Germany) grave 558: (pers. comm. Dr. M. C. Blaich). Edingen, Gde. Edingen-Neckarhausen (Baden-Württemberg, Germany): (pers. comm. Prof. Dr. G. Fingerlin). Gießen and environment (Hessen, Germany): H. Zeiß, 'Hessische Brandbestattungen der jüngeren Merowingerzeit', *Germania* 18 (1934): 279-284, esp. 281, fig. 1,4. Schwabsburg: Zeller, *Die fränkischen Altertümer des nördlichen Rheinhessen*, pl. 69.12.

<sup>67</sup> Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk*, pp. 133 ff.

<sup>68</sup> A discussion of origin and distribution of belt sets with many pieces would lead to far now, see for example: J. Werner, 'Nomadische Gürtel bei Persern, Byzantinern und Langobarden', in *La Civiltà dei Longobardi in Europa*, eds. E. Cerulli et al. (Kongress Rom und Cividale dei Friuli 1971. Problemi attuali di Scienza e di Cultura 189; Roma, 1974), pp. 109-139; Bálint, 'Byzantinisches zur Herkunftsfrage des vielteiligen Gürtels'; M. Schmauder, 'Vielteilige Gürtelgarnituren des 6.-7. Jahrhunderts: Herkunft, Aufkommen und Trägerkreis', in *Die Awaren am Rand der byzantinischen Welt*, ed. F. Daim (Monographien zur Frühgeschichte und Mittelalterarchäologie 7; Innsbruck, 2000), pp. 15-44.

<sup>58</sup> H. Zeiß, 'Das Reihengräberfeld von Weihmörting, B.-A. Passau', *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* 12 (1934): 21-41, pl. 4.16.

<sup>59</sup> Knöchlein, p. 57, pl. 20A.2.

<sup>60</sup> Varsik, 'Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen im mittleren und unteren Donaauraum im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert', p. 103 pl. 5.3; Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen und Gürtelbeschlüge*, p. 228, fig. 84.8.

<sup>61</sup> S. Möslein, 'Ein weiteres frühmittelalterliches Gräberfeld von Alburg', *Das Archäologische Jahr in Bayern* (2000): 99-102, fig. 100.

<sup>62</sup> Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Byzantinische Gürtelschnallen und Gürtelbeschlüge*, pp. 31-33 fig. 12. and buckles of the type Syracuse/D 12. G. Zeller, *Die fränkischen Altertümer des nördlichen Rheinhessen* (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit B 15; Stuttgart, 1992), pl. 69,5; H. Dannheimer, *Das baiuwarische Reihengräberfeld*

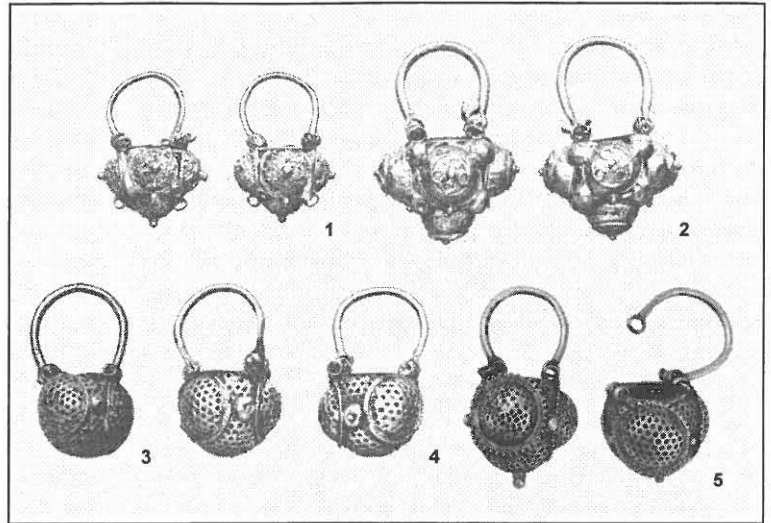


Fig. 10: Basket earrings from the eastern Mediterranean region. 1, 2 and 4: Benaki Museum Athens (Segall, *Katalog der Goldschmiede-Arbeiten*, pl. 50,234.235.237); 3: Egyptian Museum Cairo; 5: British Museum London (Yeroulanou, *Diatrita. Gold pierced-work jewellery from the 3rd to the 7th century*, p. 278 no. 463 and 464).

### Earrings

Typically 'Byzantine' basket earrings, as well as four pairs of golden lunate-shaped earrings, have been found in burials of the region in question.<sup>69</sup> Parallels from the Mediterranean and the Balkan area as well as from museum collections, show that basket earrings with pierced-work baskets have a distribution confined to Italy, former-Yugoslavia and the Carpathian Basin.<sup>70</sup> By contrast, earrings with closed, bag-shaped baskets are also known from fifth-century contexts in Bulgaria and sixth-century contexts in Macedonia.<sup>71</sup> Very few basket

earrings have been found in the core area of the Byzantine Empire. They cover the period from the third to the eleventh century.

In view of the fact that few examples have been published, further conclusions are difficult at this stage, but it is possible to distinguish between earrings composed of a central cube with four to six fastened hemispheric bowls and/or baskets<sup>72</sup> (presumably partly affected by Arab style) which can be dated to the middle Byzantine period and those earrings worked from three, usually pierced-work, hemispheric bowls/baskets (Fig. 10).<sup>73</sup> At the moment, because of a lack of stratified contexts, a precise date between the third and seventh century cannot be identified. Golden lunate earrings are well-known from the eastern Mediterranean area, but the fact that parallels cannot be made for all pieces from the region north of the Alps, suggests that not all of the earrings have a Byzantine provenance.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Basket earrings: G. Fingerlin, 'Imitationsformen byzantinischer Körbchen-Ohrhinge nördlich der Alpen. Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg', I (1974): 597-627; E. Riemer, 'Byzantinische Körbchen- und Halbmondohrhinge im Römisch-Germanischen Museum Köln (Sammlung Diergardt)', *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 25 (1992): 121-136; Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk*, pp. 170 ff. Lunate-shaped earrings: Feldkirchen (Bavaria, Germany) grave 79: Knöchlein, *Studien zur Archäologie der Merowingerzeit im Rupertiwinkel*, p. 176 pl. 38F, 3-4. Linz-Zizlau (Austria) grave 83: H. Ladenbauer-Orel, *Linz-Zizlau – Das bairische Gräberfeld an der Traunmündung*, pp. 46-47, pl. 7.9; 22, 44. Petting (Bavaria, Germany) grave 99, pair with one Mediterranean original and one copy: D. Reimann, 'Byzantinisches aus dem Rupertiwinkel – zum Ohringpaar von Petting', *Das Archäologische Jahr in Bayern* (1991): 143-145, fig. 113. Steinhöring (Bavaria, Germany) grave 11: S. Arnold, *Das bajuwarische Reihengräberfeld von Steinhöring, Landkreis Ebersberg* (Charybdis 5; Hamburg, 1992), pp. 154 f. fig. 1; pl. 4.2-3.

<sup>70</sup> Italy: E. Possenti, *Gli orecchini a cestello Altomedievali in Italia* (Ricerche Archeologia Altomedievale e Medievale 21; Florence, 1994); E. Riemer, *Romanische Grabfunde des 5. - 8. Jahrhunderts in Italien* (Internationale Archäologie 57; Rahden/Westf., 2000), pp. 45 ff. For former-Yugoslavia: J. Kastelič, 'Les boucles d'oreilles à corbeille en Slovenie', *Archaeologia Jugoslavica* 2 (1956): 119-129; Z. Vinski, 'Körbchenohrringe aus Kroatien', in *Die Wiener Schule der Völkerkunde. Festschrift des Instituts für Völkerkunde Wien 1929-1954*, eds. J. Haekel et al. (Vienna, 1956), pp. 564-568; U. Ibler, *Studien zum Kontinuitätsproblem am Übergang von der Antike zum Mittelalter in Nord- und Westjugoslawien* (Dissertation, University of Bonn, 1990), pp. 44 ff. For the Carpathian Basin: Garam, pp. 15-18, pl. 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> Riemer, *Romanische Grabfunde des 5. - 8. Jahrhunderts in Italien*, p. 61, fig. 9c. I. Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien: Städte, Vici, Refugien, Kastelle* (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission zur vergleichenden Archäologie römischer Alpen- und Donauländer / Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 54; Munich, 2002), fig. 193; 280, 1-3.

<sup>72</sup> Examples are known from Saraçhane, Istanbul: R.M. Harrison, *Excavations at Saraçhane in Istanbul I* (Princeton, 1986), p. 267 no. 597; and possibly Ephesus: *Collection H. Stathatos III: Objets antiques et byzantins* (Strasbourg, 1963), p. 287 no. 220, as well as from the collections of the Archäologische Staatssammlung München: L. Wamser and G. Zahlhaas (eds.), *Rom und Byzanz. Archäologische Kostbarkeiten aus Bayern. Ausstellungskatalog München 1998-99* (Munich, 1998), 192 f. no. 268; and the Benaki Museum, Athens: B. Segall, *Katalog der Goldschmiede-Arbeiten. Benaki Museum Athens* (Athens, 1938), pp. 152 f. no. 234 f., pl. 50.

<sup>73</sup> Possible examples are known from Asia Minor: E. Hoogendijk, 'Byzantine earrings from the Collection of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden', *Oudheidkunde Mededelingen* (1994): pp. 139-151, 141 f. fig. 3. Also from the collections of the Benaki Museum, Athens: Segall, *Katalog der Goldschmiede-Arbeiten*, p. 153, no. 237; 160 no. 252, pl. 50. Also from the British Museum: A. Yeroulanou, *Diatrita. Gold pierced-work jewellery from the 3rd to the 7th century* (Athens, 1999), p. 278 no. 464.

<sup>74</sup> I. Baldini, 'Gli orecchini a corpo semilunato: classificazione tipologica', *Corso di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina* 18 (1991): 67-101; I. Baldini Lippolis, *L'oreficeria nell'Impero di Constantinopoli tra IV e VII secolo* (Bibliotheca Archaeologica 7; Bari 1999), pp. 103 ff. no. 2.II.7 ff.; Yeroulanou, *Diatrita. Gold pierced-work jewellery from the 3rd to the 7th century*, pp. 279 ff. no. 475 ff.; Riemer, *Romanische Grabfunde des 5. - 8. Jahrhunderts in Italien*, p. 67, list 1.

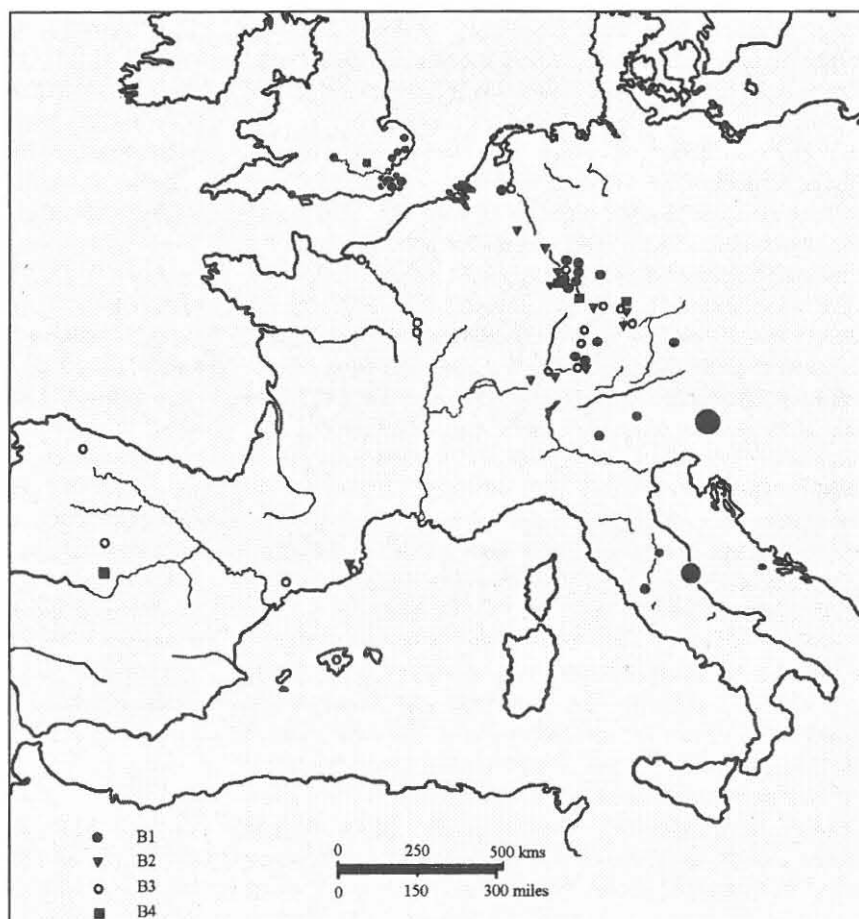


Fig. 11: Find spots of Mediterranean cast bronze vessels, type B (after Harris, p. 67 fig. 14).

### Brooches

Byzantine brooches, imitation or otherwise, are nearly unknown in north-west Europe during this period. Among the few pieces, which mainly originate from the Mediterranean area, are two disk brooches found in burial 38 at Güttingen (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) and a square jewel brooch from grave 403 at Mengen (Baden-Württemberg, Germany).<sup>75</sup> They were reworked (perhaps north of the Alps) and were only secondary used as brooches.

### Pectoral cross

A silver pectoral cross from grave 15 in Friedberg (Bavaria, Germany) is equally rare in having 'Byzantine' parallels. This is dated to the third quarter of the seventh century. It possesses numerous parallels from the

Mediterranean area, where such crosses are usually dated from the sixth to early-seventh centuries.<sup>76</sup>

### Bronze vessels

So-called 'Coptic' cast bronze vessels represent the largest group of Mediterranean vessels in north-west Europe. It has become generally accepted that they originate in the eastern Mediterranean, even if a production centre in the western Mediterranean area cannot be excluded for some types.<sup>77</sup> Since P. Périn

<sup>75</sup> G. Fingerlin, *Grab einer adligen Frau aus Güttingen (Ldkrs. Konstanz)* (Badische Fundberichte, Sonderheft 4; Freiburg, 1964), pl. 2,1-2; 10,1.3; G. Fingerlin, *Die alamannischen Gräberfelder von Güttingen und Merdingen in Südbaden* (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit A 12; Berlin, 1971), pl. 18, 3-4. H. Zeiß, 'Die frühbyzantinische Fibel von Mengen, Ldkr. Freiburg i. Br.', *Germania* 23 (1939): 269-273; M. Egger, 'Das alamannische Gräberfeld von Mengen ('Hohle-Merzengraben')', in *FundMengen. Mengen im frühen Mittelalter* (Archäologische Informationen aus Baden-Württemberg 25; Stuttgart, 1994), pp. 55-69, fig. 41 and cover.

<sup>76</sup> H. Roth, 'Almandinhandel und -verarbeitung im Bereich des Mittelmeeres', *Beiträge zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie* 2 (1980): 309-334, esp. 332 fig. 8; M. Trier, *Die frühmittelalterliche Besiedlung des unteren und mittleren Lechtals nach archäologischen Quellen* (Materialhefte zur Bayerischen Vorgeschichte A 84; Kallmünz/Opf., 2002), pp. 325 f. pl. 25.

<sup>77</sup> See: J. Werner, 'Italisches und koptisches Bronzegefäß des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts nordwärts der Alpen', in *Mnemosynon Theodor Wiegand*, eds. J. F. Crome et al. (Munich, 1938), pp. 74-86; J. Werner, 'Zwei gegossene koptische Bronzegefäße aus Salona', *Zbornik Radova Posvećenik Michael Abramiću 1. Vjesnik za Arheologiju i Historiju Dalmatinsku* 56/59 (1954/57): 115-128. For discussion about places of production, see: H. Dannheimer, 'Zur Herkunft der "koptischen" Bronzegefäße der Merowingerzeit', *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* 44 (1979): 123-147; H. Roth, 'Urcei alexandrini: Zur Herkunft gegossenen "koptischen" Buntmetallgeräts aufgrund von Schriftquellen', *Germania* 58 (1980): 156-161; K. Werz, "'Sogenanntes koptisches" Buntmetallgeschirr' (Konstanz, 2005), pp. 65 f. M.C. Carretta, 'Il catalogo del vasellame bronzeo Italiano Altomedievale'

mapped the distribution of the vessels in the West, a few more have been found – for example vessels from Avar-controlled areas (Hungary) – but the general principles of the distribution have not changed (Fig. 11).<sup>78</sup>

### Glass vessels

By contrast, ‘Byzantine’ glass vessels are scarce. Examples tend to comprise stemmed goblets with feet, which are found mainly in southern Germany and the Rhine country with only few find-spots further west.<sup>79</sup> They are likely to have been manufactured in Italy, probably at either Invillino (*Ibligo*), Torcello or Rome, where there were early medieval glass workshops.<sup>80</sup>

### Pilgrim flasks

Pilgrim flasks (*ampullae*) were often used ‘souvenirs’ of pilgrimage, and are, therefore, unusual here insofar as they might reflect the presence of Westerners who had travelled to the eastern Mediterranean area and, even where this is not possible to establish, permit insights into contacts and relations between East and West. Three types of fourth- to seventh-century flask have been identified: flasks from the Menas sanctuary near Alexandria, flasks from the Holy Land and those from smaller sanctuaries in western Asia. In north-west Europe, *ampullae* are well-known, but nearly all of them come from museum collections and only few derive from secure archaeological contexts. As a result, using them as evidence for Byzantine contacts with the Merovingian kingdom is still problematical.<sup>81</sup>

### Plant remains and textiles

One must not forget the evidence for exotic plants, such as clove or incense, although these occur in very small quantities in the archaeological record.<sup>82</sup> The same applies to textiles. Silk has been identified in a few archaeological contexts: for example, there is a silk cross from grave 62 at Oberflacht (Baden-Württemberg, Germany). There is also a silk garment from Chelles (France).<sup>83</sup> Cotton and gold braid, other textiles of possible eastern Mediterranean origin, are also very rarely found in archaeological contexts.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, as a result of progress in textile archaeology, some gold braid textiles combined with silk has been identified in recent years, and it is interesting that their number increases strongly in the second half of the seventh century, especially from high-status burials in the Austrasian part of the Frankish kingdom.<sup>85</sup> At present, it is still unclear whether those textiles arrived as ‘finished products’ from the eastern Mediterranean or whether silk materials were processed further west in Italy or even in the Merovingian Empire itself. However, future analyses may well be able to show which gold braid textiles can be reliably identified as eastern Mediterranean products.

(Ricerche di Archeologia altomedievale e medievale 4; Florence, 1982), pp. 11 f.; P. Périn, ‘La vaisselle de bronze dite “copte” dans les royaumes romano-germaniques d’Occident. État des la question’, *Antiquité Tardive* 13 (2005): 85–97.

<sup>78</sup> P. Périn, ‘A propos des vases de bronze “coptes” du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle en Europe de l’ouest: le pichet de Bardouville (Seine-Maritime)’, *Cahiers Archéologiques* 40 (1992): 35–50; E. Bárdos, ‘“Kopt” bronzedény a Zamárdi avar temetőből’, *Somogyi Múzeumok Közleményei* 9 (1992): 3–40; Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk*, pp. 440 ff., list 8.

<sup>79</sup> F. Damminger, *Die Merowingerzeit im südlichen Kraichgau und in den angrenzenden Landschaften* (Materialhefte zur Archäologie in Baden-Württemberg 61; Stuttgart, 2002), pp. 114–118, fig. 36, list 5.

<sup>80</sup> V. Bierbrauer, ‘Invillino-Ibligo in Friaul I. Die römische Siedlung und das spätantik-frühmittelalterliche Castrum’ (Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 33; Munich, 1987), pp. 285 f.; L. Leciejewicz et al., *Torcello. Scavi 1961–62* (Istituto Nazionale d’Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte Monografia 3; Rome, 1977), pp. 114 ff., fig. 108–111; M.S. Arena et al. (eds.), *Roma dall’Antichità al Medioevo. Archeologia e Storia* (Nel Museo Nazionale Romano Crypta Balbi; Rome and Milan, 2001), pp. 308–310, no. II.3.303–342.

<sup>81</sup> See Bangert, this volume. Also: Ch. Lambert and P. Pedemonte Demeglio, ‘Ampolle devozionali ed itinerari di pellegrinaggio tra IV e VII secolo’, *Antiquité Tardive* 2 (1994): 205–231; P. Linscheid, ‘Untersuchungen zur Verbreitung von Menasampullen nördlich der Alpen’, in *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn 1991*, eds. E. Dassmann and J. Engemann (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 20; Münster, 1995), pp. 982–986.

<sup>82</sup> For cloves and incense: Horbourg, Dép. Haut-Rhin (France), grave 4/1884; *Korrespondenzblatt der Westdeutschen Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst* 4, 1 (1885): Nr. 2, Sp. 1–3. Köln St. Severin (Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany) grave 217: O. Doppelfeld, ‘Das fränkische Frauengrab unter dem Chor des Kölner Domes’, *Germania* 38 (1960): 89–113, 111. Schleithem, Kt. Schaffhausen (Switzerland) grave 637: Burzler et al., *Das frühmittelalterliche Schleithem*. On the provenance of cloves and incense, see: J. Werner, *Das alamannische Fürstengrab von Wittlingen* (Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 2; Munich, 1950), p. 45; J.I. Miller, *The spice trade of the Roman Empire 29 B.C. to A.D. 641* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 48; 102–104; W.W. Müller, ‘s. v. Weihrauch’, in *RE Suppld.* 15 (Munich, 1978), Sp. 700–777; Schoch, in Burzler et al. *Das frühmittelalterliche Schleithem*, pp. 285–288.

<sup>83</sup> A. Streiter and E. Weiland, ‘Das seidene Aufnahmkreuz aus Oberflacht. Gewebeanalyse und Musterrekonstruktion’, in *Textilien aus Archäologie und Geschichte. Festschrift K. Tidow* eds. L. Bender Jörgensen et al. (Neumünster, 2003), pp. 142–147; J.-P. Laporte and R. Boyer (eds.), *Trésors de Chelles: Sépultures et Reliques de la Reine Bathilde et de l’Abesse Bertille* (Ausstellungskatalog Chelles 1991; Chelles 1991).

<sup>84</sup> Cotton was identified in a female grave at Bülach St. Laurentius, Kt. Zürich (Schweiz): H. Amrein et al., ‘Neue Untersuchungen zum Frauengrab des 7. Jahrhunderts in der reformierten Kirche von Bülach (Kanton Zürich)’, *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 56 (1999): pp. 73–114, esp. 95 f. fig. 32–33. Gold braid textiles are known from Lauchheim ‘Wasserfurche’, Ostalbkreis (Germany) grave 795: Stork; Ch. Raub and H. Weiss, ‘Untersuchung von Resten der Goldfäden eines Brokatgewebes aus Lauchheim, Ostalbkreis, Gräberfeld “Wasserfurche”, Grab 795’, *Archäologische Ausgrabungen in Baden-Württemberg* (1994): pp. 217–220; A. Stauffer and F. Weisse, ‘Ein frühmittelalterliches Goldgewebe aus Lauchheim’, *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 22, 1 (1998): 729–736.

<sup>85</sup> A. Bartel et al., ‘Der Prachtmantel des Fürsten von Hötting. Textilarchäologische Untersuchungen zum Fürstengrab 143 von Großhötting’, *Bericht der Bayerischen Bodendenkmalpflege* 43/44 (2002/03): 229–249; A. Bartel, ‘Die Goldbänder des Herrn aus Straubing-Alburg, Untersuchungen einer Beinbekleidung aus dem frühen Mittelalter’, *Bericht der Bayerischen Bodendenkmalpflege* 43/44 (2002/03): 261–272.



## Balances and weights

Balances and weights are important typical 'Byzantine' small finds, although they are not very frequently found in north-west Europe.<sup>86</sup> Precision balances of Mediterranean origin are known in Belgium and in England.<sup>87</sup> In Germany, however, apart from the weights from grave 75 at Singen (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) and tomb 6 at Klepsau (Baden-Württemberg, Germany), which are dated to the sixth century, most finds belong to the Migration Period or represent local imitations.<sup>88</sup>

## 'Oriental' finds of the sixth and seventh centuries

From the above discussion it would appear that Byzantine finds do not increase substantially in numbers as we move from the early Merovingian period into the sixth and seventh centuries. In fact, the western Mediterranean area, including the north-west Balkans, played a crucial role in the production of several categories of object sometimes referred to as 'Byzantine'. One might be tempted to suggest that there were only very sporadic or coincidental contacts with the eastern Mediterranean region.

However, this is not the case, as we see when we look at the relatively large group of artefacts that are not typically 'Byzantine', but which must have arrived in the West through the eastern Mediterranean area and/or the Byzantine Empire. These suggest very intensive relations between Western Europe and these areas until around 700. The provenance of these objects is to be located in all probability between north-east Africa and south Asia, on the basis of raw material deposits and scientific analyses.

The garnet ranks high among these objects. It was used in large quantities as a gemstone fitting for brooches and other jewellery, and derived from fifth- and sixth-century south-east India and Sri Lanka.<sup>89</sup> The distribution of

garnet disk brooches alone shows how widespread the use of this gemstone was in Central and Western Europe.<sup>90</sup>

Cowrie shells also fall into this category. *Cypraea pantherina*, thought to have been carried as amulets, come from the Red Sea, while the *Cypraea tigris* type come from the Indian Ocean. Their distribution in Western Europe (Fig. 12) is similar to the red garnet.<sup>91</sup>

Ivory, another 'oriental' import, occurs in north-west Europe mainly as rings, which served on the continent as the 'enclosure rings' of ornamented bronze discs (Fig. 13). Yet, in Britain the bronze discs are missing and ivory rings are interpreted as components of bags.<sup>92</sup> Analyses of the material confirm that they are made of African elephant ivory, probably the tusks of savannah elephants.<sup>93</sup> That means that the elephant ivory found in Western Europe was probably imported from north-east Africa. A survey of ivory rings in southern Germany and adjacent regions showed a very dense distribution, which can only be explained by a heavy inflow of the material.<sup>94</sup>

Some beads found in Western Europe also have an 'oriental' provenance. Shells from the coasts of East Africa, the Red Sea or the eastern Mediterranean were the raw material for 'discoid beads', usually called 'mother-of-pearl-beads' because of their shining surface. They occur in Merovingian tombs of the seventh through to the

<sup>86</sup> H. Steuer, 'Gewichtsgeldwirtschaften im frühgeschichtlichen Europa', in *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa IV. Der Handel der Karolinger- und Wikingerzeit. Kolloquien Göttingen 1980-83*, eds. K. Düwel et al. (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. F. 156; Göttingen, 1987), pp. 405-527, esp. 432 note 105; 433 f. note 106; completion, see: H. Steuer, 'Spätromische und byzantinische Gewichte in Südwestdeutschland', *Archäologische Nachrichten aus Baden* 43 (1990): 43-59.

<sup>87</sup> J. Breuer and J. Alenus-Lecerf, 'La boîte à poids monétaires de Lutommel', *Archaeologia Belgica*, 86 (1965): 103-116; see also the collection in: Steuer, 'Gewichtsgeldwirtschaften im frühgeschichtlichen Europa', p. 440, note 129.

<sup>88</sup> Steuer, 'Spätromische und byzantinische Gewichte in Südwestdeutschland'.

<sup>89</sup> S. Van Roy and L. Vanhaecke, 'L'origine des grenats à l'époque mérovingienne', *Vie Archéologique* 48 (1997): 124-137; S. Greiff, 'Naturwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zur Frage der Rohsteinquellen für frühmittelalterlichen Almandingranatschmuck rheinfränkischer Provenienz', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum* 45, 2 (1998): 599-646; D. Quast and U. Schüssler, 'Mineralogische Untersuchungen zur Herkunft der Granate merowingerzeitlicher

Cloisonnéarbeiten', *Germania*, 78, 1 (2000): 75-96; P. Périn, 'Die Herkunft der im merowingischen Gallien gefundenen Granate. Neue chemische und mineralogische Analysen', in *Post-roman towns and trade in Europe, Byzantium and the Near-East, Konferenz Bad Homburg 2004. Abstracts*, ed. J. Henning (Frankfurt, 2004), pp. 76-78; for divergent results, see: F. Farges, 'Mineralogy of the Louvres merovingian garnet cloisonné jewellery: origins of the first kinds of France', *The American Mineralogist* 83 (1998): 323-330.

<sup>90</sup> K. Vielitz, *Die Granatscheibenfibeln der Merowingerzeit* (Europe médiévale 3; Montagnac, 2003).

<sup>91</sup> A. v. d. Driesch, 'Tierartige Bestimmung von Fundstücken', in H. Geisler, *Das frühbairische Gräberfeld Straubing-Bajuwarenstraße I: Katalog der archäologischen Befunde und Funde* (Internationale Archäologie 30; Rahden/Westf., 1998), pp. 372-374; K. Banghard, 's. v. Kaurischnecke', in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde XVI* (Berlin and New York, 2000), pp. 344-347; K. Banghard, 'Kauris im merowingerzeitlichen Europa. Ein Beitrag zur frühmittelalterlichen Fernhandelsgeschichte', *Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte* 20, 1 (2001): 15-21.

<sup>92</sup> D. Renner, *Die durchbrochenen Zierscheiben der Merowingerzeit*, (Kataloge vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Altertümer 18; Mainz 1970); J.W. Huggett, 'Imported grave goods and the early Anglo-Saxon economy', *Medieval Archaeology* 32 (1988): 63-96, esp. 69, fig. 3; Harris, p. 174, fig. 61; C. Hills, 'From Isidore to isotopes: ivory rings in Early Medieval graves', in *Image and power in the archaeology of Early Medieval Britain. Festschrift R. Cramp*, eds. H. Hamerow and A. MacGregor (Oxford, 2001), pp. 131-146.

<sup>93</sup> J. Drauschke and A. Banerjee, 'Zur Identifikation, Herkunft und Verarbeitung von Elfenbein in der Merowingerzeit' *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 37, 1 (2007): 109-128.

<sup>94</sup> Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk*, 76 ff.

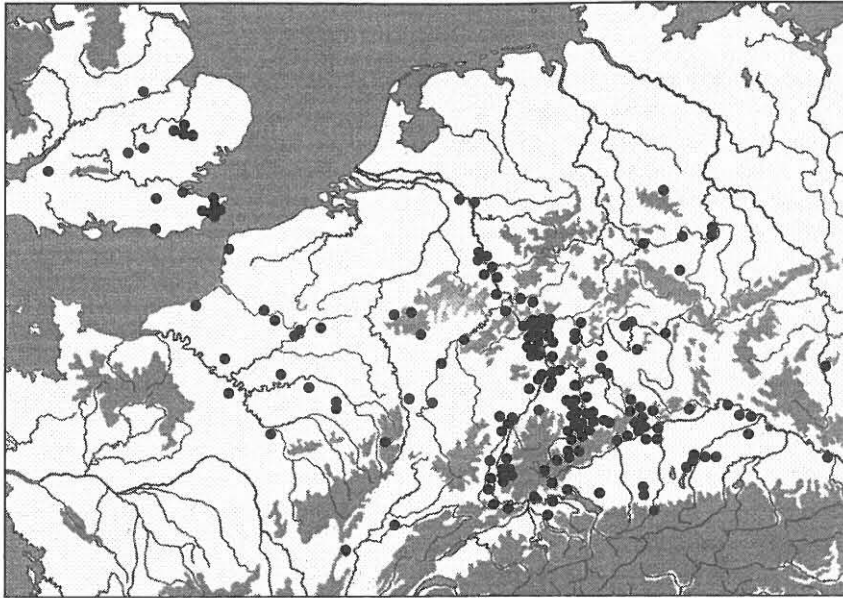


Fig. 12: Distribution of Merovingian-period cowries (after Banghard, 'Kauris im merowingerzeitlichen Europa', p. 346 fig. 32).

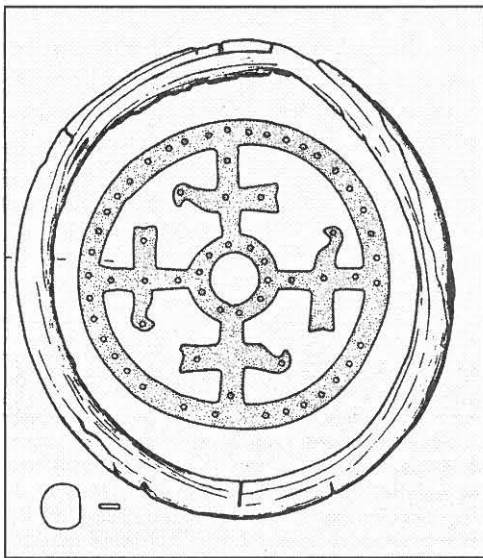


Fig. 13: Bronze amulet disc with surrounding ring of elephant ivory from Alburg, city of Straubing (Germany) grave 500 (after Geisler, pl. 182, 13.14).

beginning of the eighth century.<sup>95</sup> Numerous amethyst beads of the sixth and seventh century are also known from north-west Europe, although the source of the

amethyst deposits is not yet clear. South Asia or north-east Africa and/or regions around the eastern Mediterranean are all possibilities.<sup>96</sup> Given that there are numerous, almost identical finds of almond-shaped amethyst beads in the eastern Mediterranean area, which are found primarily on Byzantine necklaces, an 'oriental' provenance seems more convincing than an exploitation of Alpine deposits.<sup>97</sup>

The same applies to cylindrical beads made from sea foam, known from female graves of the second half of the fifth century to around 600.<sup>98</sup> The material has already been mentioned in association with early Merovingian belt buckles of Mediterranean origin (see above) and was also used – likewise in cylindrical form – for 'sword

<sup>95</sup> F. Siegmund and M. Weiß, 'Perlen aus Muschelscheibchen im merowingerzeitlichen Mitteleuropa', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 19 (1989): 297-307; A. Lennartz, 'Muschelperlen – Perlmutterperlen – Schneckenperlen. Drei Namen für ein Phänomen?', in *Certamina Archaeologica. Festschrift H. Schnitzler*, eds. Ch. Keller et al. (Bonner Beiträge zur vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie 1; Bonn, 2000), pp. 191-202; for parallels from East Africa: M. Horton, *Shanga. The archaeology of a Muslim trading community on the coast of East Africa* (Memoirs of the British Institute in Eastern Africa 14; London 1996), p. 323, fig. 246, a-b.

<sup>96</sup> Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk*, 54 ff.

<sup>97</sup> For a Mediterranean (namely Italian) origin for these objects, see: J. Werner, *Münzdatierte austrasische Grabfunde*, (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit 3; Berlin and Leipzig, 1935), p. 75; R. Christlein, *Das alamannische Reihengräberfeld von Marktoberdorf im Allgäu* (Materialhefte zur Bayerischen Vorgeschichte 21; Kallmünz/Opf., 1966), p. 74 note 206; U. Koch, *Das Reihengräberfeld bei Schretzheim* (Germanische Denkmäler der Völkerwanderungszeit A 13; Berlin 1977), pp. 73 f.; U. Koch, *Das fränkische Gräberfeld von Klepsau im Hohenlohekreis* (Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 38; Stuttgart, 1990), p. 124 note 44. For Byzantine parallels see, for example: Baldini Lippolis, pp. 134 ff. Nr. 1.c.

<sup>98</sup> For lists without differentiation of the raw material, see: A. Heege, *Grabfunde der Merowingerzeit aus Heidenheim-Großkuchen* (Materialhefte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 9; Stuttgart 1987), pp. 138 f. note 460; Ch. Grünwald, *Das alamannische Gräberfeld von Unterthürheim, Bayerisch-Schwaben* (Materialhefte zur Bayerischen Vorgeschichte A 59; Kallmünz/Opf., 1988), p. 118, note 90; R. Reiß, *Der merowingerzeitliche Reihengräberfriedhof von Westheim (Kreis Weißenburg-Gunzenhausen)* (Wissenschaftliche Beibände zum Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums 10; Nürnberg, 1994), p. 105, note 170.

beads' of that date.<sup>99</sup> Their origin, or at least the origin of the raw material (sea foam/sepiolith), is probably to be looked for in the eastern Mediterranean area.<sup>100</sup>

Mention could also be made of further groups of objects, whose Mediterranean and/or 'Byzantine' origin is debated.<sup>101</sup> But the material presented here already suggests that the quantity and variety of goods transported from or through the eastern Mediterranean area to north-west Europe in the sixth and seventh century was very considerable and substantially greater than that of the fifth century. Therefore, we must assume continuing close relations between the Merovingian kingdom and the Mediterranean area. It is possible that the connection took place via southern France and Italy, for the evidence for direct connections with Constantinople is not compelling. Interestingly, the Central and Western European material discussed above points to a continuing inflow of material until at least about 700, which, it must be emphasised, is in contrast to the Mediterranean, where long-distance exchange is hardly recognisable in the archaeological record after the second half of the seventh century. Admittedly, the overall number of imports to Central and Western Europe strongly decreases in the second half of the seventh century, but it is hardly likely that these objects are all residual finds.

### The 'Byzantine' nature of the Mediterranean finds

On the one hand, this evidence demonstrates a close relationship between the Byzantine-controlled eastern Mediterranean area and north-west Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, it has been

demonstrated that some, apparently typical, 'Byzantine' artefacts are very likely to have been manufactured in the western Mediterranean and/or Italy or in the north-west Balkans, rather than in the 'core' area of the Byzantine world.

In order to reconcile these two findings it is clear that some differentiation needs to be applied to the term 'Byzantine'. To describe many of these finds simply as 'Byzantine' is unhelpful. Too often this term is primarily associated with the core area of the Byzantine Empire and the capital, Constantinople. As an indication of origin, this is not applicable for much of the material discussed here; moreover, it obstructs the view of the real reference systems, even if thereby the stylistic and typological relations of the individual artefacts are determined correctly.

It is, therefore, necessary to separate the stylistic and typological classification from the localisation of the probable workshops. This is because the definition of 'Byzantine' as a typological tool has developed very differently depending upon the material being discussed.<sup>103</sup> Besides, the now substantial progress made in research on early medieval Mediterranean products, means that reliable statements on a more or less representative material basis (depending upon the kinds of objects concerned) seem to be possible. Thus, the relationship between the distribution of Mediterranean objects and the localisation of workshops becomes more and more important. The criterion canon should be supplemented by technical-scientific investigations, which give, on the one hand, information about the raw materials used (including their provenance) and which could, on the other hand, illuminate procedures relating to manufacture, from which one can draw conclusions about the environment of origin. For example, F. Daim was recently able to identify belt types of 'Byzantine' production amongst eighth-century belts in the Avar Khanate, on the basis of a sharply defined catalogue of criteria, in which technical analyses took a central place.<sup>104</sup>

The stylistic development of a type, which is always a mirror of contemporary ideas about the 'correct' appearance of an object, permits an opportunity to make statements about cultural traditions standing behind that development. The distribution of the type enables us to supplement these statements, although they need not always be congruent. So, for example, typologically 'Byzantine' finds are often more frequently found outside the Byzantine Empire's borders than within them. This is sometimes a function of different cultural practices – for

<sup>99</sup> For lists without differentiation of the raw material, see: J. Werner, *Beiträge zur Archäologie des Attila-Reiches* (Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, N. F. 38 A; Munich, 1956), pp. 120-128 list IV, pl. 75, map 11; Menghin, pp. 356-357, list C1.d, map 19; J. Cseh et al., *Gepidische Gräberfelder im Theissgebiet II* (Monumenta Germanorum Archaeologica Hungariae 2: Monumenta Gepidica; Budapest, 2005), p. 174, fig. 33.

<sup>100</sup> For a description of the sea foam-material, see: M. Herdick, 'Meerscham – ein fast vergessener Rohstoff in der Archäologie', *Anschnitt* 48, 1 (1996): 35-36; Herdick, 'Vom Mineral zum Prestigeobjekt'.

<sup>101</sup> For example, millefiori-beads: U. Koch, 'Mediterrane und fränkische Glasperlen des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts aus Finnland', in *Studien zur vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie. Festschrift J. Werner*, eds. G. Kossack and G. Ulbert, (Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Ergänzungsband I, 2; Munich, 1974), pp. 495-520; A. Volkmann and C. Theune, 'Merowingerzeitliche Millefioriperlen in Mitteleuropa', *Ethnographisch-Archäologische Zeitschrift* 42 (2001): 521-553; or weapons such as lances and arrowheads, as well as armaments: U. v. Freeden, 'Awarische Funde in Süddeutschland?', *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums*, 38, 2 (1991): 593-627; U. Koch, 'Der Ritt in die Ferne. Erfolgreiche Kriegszüge im Langobardenreich', in *Die Alamannen*, ed. Archäologisches Landesmuseum Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 403-415; R. Kory, 's. v. Schuppen- und Lamellenpanzer', in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde XXVI* (Berlin and New York, 2004), pp. 375-403.

<sup>102</sup> Roth, 'Handel und Gewerbe vom 6. bis 8. Jh.', p. 350; Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk*.

<sup>103</sup> For this discussion in relation to definitions of 'Byzantine' art see, for example: R. Warland, 's. v. Byzantinische Kunst', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 2 (Freiburg, 1994), Sp. 863-867; C. Mango, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford history of Byzantium*, ed. C. Mango (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>104</sup> Daim, 86 ff.

example, within the barbarian realms the furnishing of graves was practised extensively. Sometimes, as we have seen, it is because typically 'Byzantine' objects were also produced beyond the borders of the Byzantine Empire.

In view of possible inaccuracies in the identification of production sites in the overall Mediterranean area, it is advisable to use first the term 'Mediterranean' for the objects in question, and then to supplement this with 'eastern' (or 'western'), if possible.<sup>105</sup> If still more detailed information on provenance is available (for example, if an object derives from Italy, North Africa or the Balkan provinces), a further differentiation of the term 'Byzantine' could take place.<sup>106</sup> In the eastern Mediterranean, the 'core' area around Constantinople must be distinguished from the northern Black Sea area and from the Near Eastern provinces and Egypt. As shown above, the study of the fifth- to seventh-century material culture of the Mediterranean area has progressed to a point where such designations are already possible for some groups of artefacts.

### The problem of how objects arrived in north-west Europe

Trade dominates most explanations of archaeological distributions, including those examined here. Yet, the structure and conditions of this trade are almost never described in detail, and neither is the possible migration of persons bringing the 'strange' goods to north-west Europe. The contemporary written sources must, of course, be analysed as a first approach to the problem of artefact distribution mechanisms in Merovingian times. Merchants are well-documented, meeting the cost of living by the purchase and sales of goods.<sup>107</sup> The written sources hint at other possible interpretations, but it must be kept in mind that they are – like archaeological sources – incomplete and contain little or no information about areas not actually mentioned within them, for example the regions to the east of the Rhine.<sup>108</sup>

Despite these limitations, there are a variety of possibilities by which the distribution could have been achieved according to written sources. D. Claude has summarised some of these, including robbery and war booty, mutual exchange between high-status clerics, aristocrats and other 'free' people, and donations by the Byzantine emperor to the Merovingian kings. Re-

distribution took place as well, sometimes in ecclesiastical contexts, sometimes as gifts made by kings and other nobles to subordinate social groups or individuals. An intensified circulation of goods within the seignorial systems must also be understood as a form of re-distribution. The taxation and collection of tariffs may have led to a forced exchange, too.<sup>109</sup>

The shown mechanisms can be assigned without difficulty to the categories of redistribution, reciprocity and market exchange (including trade), which belong to a model widely accepted and applied within anthropological studies.<sup>110</sup> This classification (Fig. 14) can help in the examination of, for example, the mechanism of 'trade'. That is, 'trade' can be organised as barter or based on a monetary economy. Goods or services resulting from over-production, and considered to be of equal worth, are exchanged between partners or institutions either by paying a visit to the trade partner or by visiting the market place. Each person participating in the exchange acts according to their own perceived advantage. This is much more important than the social meaning of exchange: the mere existence of professional or long-distance merchants is not a compelling condition for the existence of trade.<sup>111</sup>

This model explains the distribution of goods using the concept of exchange. However, objects could have been transported over long distances by individuals, not necessarily with any intention to distribute or to exchange them. This, of course, applies particularly to migrations or exogamous procedures, as well as by itinerant craftsmen (Fig. 14).

It is clear that trade cannot be used as the sole explanation for the importation of goods into the Merovingian kingdom. There are other mechanisms involved in the late antique and early medieval transportation of goods in the Mediterranean area. It is possible, too, that the state was responsible for some forms of long-distance exchange, and that distribution was the result of a so-called 'de-commercialized' economy, at least in its most

<sup>109</sup> Claude, 'Aspekte des Binnenhandels im Merowingerreich auf Grund der Schriftquellen', pp. 10-14.

<sup>110</sup> U. Köhler, 'Formen des Handels aus ethnologischer Sicht', in *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa I. Methodische Grundlagen und Darstellungen zum Handel in vorgeschichtlicher Zeit und in der Antike. Kolloquien Göttingen 1980-1983*, eds. K. Düwel et al. (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. F. 143; Göttingen, 1985), pp. 13-55, esp. 16-22; J. Jensen, 'Wirtschaftsethnologie', in *Ethnologie. Einführung und Überblick*, eds. H. Fischer (3. Auflage Berlin and Hamburg 1992), pp. 119-147, 134-143; see also: C. Renfrew and P. Bahn, *Archaeology: theories, methods and practice* (London, 1991), p. 310.

<sup>111</sup> Köhler, 21 f.; Jensen, p. 141.

<sup>105</sup> This has already been implemented by Fingerlin, 'Eine Schnalle mediterraner Form'; Kazanski; Quast, 'Garnitures des ceintures méditerranéennes'.

<sup>106</sup> Garam, pp. 12-13.

<sup>107</sup> See the sources collected by Verhulst.

<sup>108</sup> H. Roth, 'Zum Handel der Merowingerzeit auf Grund ausgewählter archäologischer Quellen', in *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa III. Der Handel des frühen Mittelalters. Kolloquien Göttingen 1980-1983*, eds. K. Düwel et al. (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. F. 150; Göttingen 1985), pp. 161-192, 164-171 table 1.

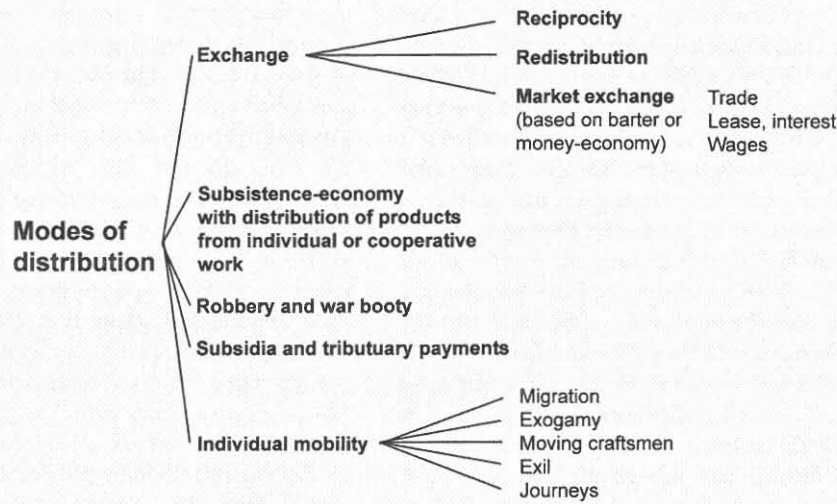


Fig. 14: Possible forms of distribution in accordance with anthropological models (with additions).

extreme form.<sup>112</sup> According to this model, the exchange of goods was mainly directed by the state, in the form of supplies (*annona*), and connections were principally between the estates of the church and the needs of the ruling elites. In this scenario, merchants would have acted merely as agents for the state.

However, it is important to remember that in complex, organised societies several exchange mechanisms can co-exist. In addition, it is necessary to distinguish between long-distance cross-Mediterranean contacts and regional markets, because whereas the former may have been driven by state intervention, the latter may have comprised money-based trade, which was dependent, to some extent, on supply and demand dynamics. It is not only conditions in the Mediterranean area which must be considered when seeking to explain the transfer of Mediterranean goods to north-west Europe, but economic circumstances within the Merovingian kingdom itself, particularly given that economic life was quite differently structured either side of the Rhine.<sup>113</sup>

It would seem that the two phases differentiated above were influenced by different transfer mechanisms, notwithstanding the groups of objects, their archaeological contexts and their chronological classification. The imports (whether from the eastern or western Mediterranean area) of earliest Merovingian times are dominated by very prestigious objects of high value and made of precious materials, which are particularly associated with high-status burials. It is not

surprisingly, therefore, that Mediterranean buckles, for example, led to many imitations. In view of this situation (and further evidence from grave-goods), it would appear that the individual mobility of people and personal contacts with the Mediterranean area were crucial for the transfer of goods from the south and east. Mercenaries could have acquired a buckle, a long and narrow *sax* or helmets when they served in the Byzantine army, for they are sometimes found together in one burial assemblage. Exceptional pieces, like the gilt-handled *spathae*, the Syrian glass flask from Bräunlingen, the numerous silver spoons or silk fabrics, give the impression of high-quality honours or gifts, although it remains questionable whether 'junior' leaders of the Germanic tribes were regarded as important enough to receive such allowances from the Byzantine Emperor. Perhaps not, and it must be noted here that objects deriving from Italy after the Ostrogothic conquest must probably be interpreted as gifts of the Ostrogothic rulers, rather than of the Byzantine court. Indeed, in view of the numerous Italian treasuries containing Byzantine silver spoons, it would be wrong not to include robbery and war booty as a 'transport factor'. Yet, within the Alamannic settlement range of south-western Germany, strong relationships with the middle Danube area can be seen, and these can be partly interpreted as indications of an influx of persons.<sup>114</sup>

A change in the variety of Mediterranean finds is clearly recognisable around 510-530. It is influenced by general developments in dress style of that time. Thus, the frequency of ivory rings occurring correlates to the custom of carrying ornamented bronze discs as amulets on a long ribbon as part of the female costume. Nevertheless, changes can be recognized, in my opinion, which are not related to changes in dress style. For

<sup>112</sup> See: C.R. Whittaker, 'Late Roman trade and traders', in *Trade in the ancient economy*, eds. P. Garnsey et al. (London, 1983), pp. 163-180. Similarly: P. Arthur, 'Eastern Mediterranean amphorae between 500 and 700: a view from Italy', in *Ceramica in Italia: VI-VII secolo. Kongress Rom 1995*, ed. L. Sagui (Florence, 1998), pp. 157-183.

<sup>113</sup> Roth, 'Zum Handel der Merowingerzeit auf Grund ausgewählter archäologischer Quellen', pp. 161 f.; H. Roth, 'Produktion und Erwerb von Edelmetallerzeugnissen', in *Festschrift für Otto-Herman Frey zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Dobiak (Marburger Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 16; Marburg 1994), pp. 517-522.

<sup>114</sup> D. Quast, 'Vom Einzelgrab zum Friedhof. Beginn der Reihengraberstätte im 5. Jahrhundert', in *Die Alamannen*, ed. Archäologisches Landesmuseum Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart 1997), pp. 171-190; Quast, 'Auf der Suche nach fremden Männern'.

example, necklaces and/or beads, as well as ribbons, with amulets had been carried in early Merovingian times, too, but cowries and ivory rings, mother-of-pearl- and amethyst-beads are part of the archaeological record only after 510-530. Likewise, in some regions, bronze vessels are part of grave-good assemblages throughout the entire Merovingian period – however the cast bronze vessels of Mediterranean origin start to make frequent appearances in burials only around 600 and again in the middle of the seventh century. These changes might reflect new connections in the Mediterranean area opening up possibilities for the transport of new types of goods.

In contrast to the other categories of object examined in this paper, ‘oriental’ precious and prestigious objects actually increase during the later phase. Goods such as cowries, ivory rings, amethyst- or mother-of-pearl-beads are now found in larger quantities and are no longer components only of high-status graves, at least between about 570-580 and 670-680. Their vast geographical distribution is noteworthy. Given this, and given that we are concerned here with material which was not available in north-west Europe, it is likely that we are seeing a demand for these ‘oriental’ goods, which led to trade relations in the sense defined above. Moreover, in the western parts of the Frankish kingdom the effects of so-called ‘privileged goods traffic’ must be considered.<sup>115</sup> In other words, goods may have been transported over long distances without commercial activities (in a strict sense) being responsible.

It is not plausible that the ‘oriental’ goods are all a reflection of the activities of itinerant craftsmen, but they may comprise gifts and/or subsidies from the Byzantine Empire.<sup>116</sup> Booty taken in warfare is probably a preferable interpretation, particularly given that Frankish and Alamannic troops entered Italy several times during

the course of the sixth century.<sup>117</sup> Yet, warfare cannot explain the chronologically, as well as geographically, constant distribution of Mediterranean and ‘oriental’ goods within the borders of the Merovingian kingdom as a whole. For this reason, it is necessary to differentiate the find material. The numerous items of Byzantine coins, Mediterranean jewellery and components of dress (earrings, brooches, pectoral cross, belt-buckles and exotic textiles) might have not been commodities in the sense of being traded items; for them the already mentioned alternatives are rather more satisfying explanations.

A further possibility is to understand the distribution of Mediterranean material as a consequence of the migration of distinct groups into the Frankish kingdom, especially during the sixth century.<sup>118</sup> However, this hypothesis cannot be proved at present. It is likely that some of the Mediterranean objects arrived into the eastern Merovingian kingdom in this way, but the proportion which might have done so is difficult to determine since the identification of different ethnic groups and ‘strangers’ in the archaeological record remains difficult.<sup>119</sup>

#### The Merovingian Empire – part of a globalized world?

In conclusion, we have seen that exchange mechanisms between the Mediterranean regions and the Merovingian kingdom can be seen in operation from the second half of the fifth century until the beginning of the eighth century. The archaeological sources suggest that the most important factors initially were inter-personal contacts, migration, gift-exchange and booty-taking, with trade becoming important later in the period. This relates well with the evidence from the Anglo-Saxon areas of Britain, where indirect trading relations appear to be responsible for the distribution of Mediterranean material (which

<sup>115</sup> The background for the so-called ‘privileged’ transport of goods were the attempts of Merovingian monasteries and churches to achieve a low-priced supply for their own requires, why they obtained privileges from the Merovingian kings such as those for St. Denis or Corbie. So-called *missi* accomplished the business and organized the transport from the Mediterranean ports in southern France to the north. D. Claude, ‘Aspekte des Binnenhandels im Merowingerreich auf Grund der Schriftquellen’, in *Untersuchungen zu Handel und Verkehr der vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Zeit in Mittel- und Nordeuropa III. Der Handel des frühen Mittelalters. Kolloquien Göttingen 1980-83*, eds. K. Düwel et al. (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. F. 150; Göttingen, 1985), pp. 9-99, esp. 78 ff. A decrease of occupation merchants within the exchange of goods in the Merovingian Empire from the sixth to the seventh century is clearly visible. S. Lebecqz, ‘Les échanges dans la Gaule du Nord au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle: une histoire en miettes’ in *The sixth century. Production, distribution and demand*, eds. R. Hodges and W. Bowden (The Transformation of the Roman World 3; Leiden, 1998), pp. 185-202, esp. 190.

<sup>116</sup> For tributes paid to the Merovingian kings in 535, 571 and 578, see: E. Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich* (3. Auflage, Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 37; 43-45, or as tribute payments of the Lombard Kingdom paid in kind (for tributes paid between 591 and 618/19 see: U. Koch, ‘Der Ritt in die Ferne’, pp. 410 f.

<sup>117</sup> U. Koch, ‘Mediterranes und langobardisches Kulturgut in Gräbern der älteren Merowingerzeit zwischen Main, Neckar und Rhein’, in *Atti del 6<sup>o</sup> Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo I. Mailand 1978* (Spoleto, 1980), pp. 107-121.

<sup>118</sup> The recent attempt by Graenert to interpret the archaeological record of southern material found in the Austrasian part of the Frankish kingdom as an effect of the migration of Lombard women is not convincing in every case. See: G. Graenert, ‘Langobardinnen in Alamannien. Zur Interpretation mediterranen Sachgutes in südwestdeutschen Frauengräbern des ausgehenden 6. Jahrhunderts’, *Germania* 78, 2 (2000): 417-447.

<sup>119</sup> This is not the place to engage in the debate, particularly vigorous in German Archaeology, on the extent to which ethnic groups can actually be distinguished in the archaeology of the Early Middle Ages. The different opinions are stated by: V. Bierbrauer, ‘Zur ethnischen Interpretation in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie’, in *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 8 ed. W. Pohl, (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 322; Vienna, 2004), pp. 45-84; S. Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie*, (Geschichte, Grundlagen, Alternativen. Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Ergänzungsband, 42; Berlin and New York, 2004).

consists mainly of identical 'oriental' objects) during the same period.<sup>120</sup> This is important because the presence of the material in Britain (which cannot necessarily be explained as an effect of migration) is a clear indication of the importance of trade as a mechanism of exchange for the finds from the continent.

However, the volume of this trade cannot have been very extensive, since the relative quantities of goods are low in relation to the total assemblage of objects from Merovingian graves. The cast bronze vessels are the exception, rather than the rule. It seems very improbable that merchants travelled constantly over the Alps or along the Rhône, selling their goods within the borders of the Merovingian kingdom. It is hard to envisage them roaming from village to village ('Tröpfelhandel'), in order to exchange gemstones, cowries and ivory for the surplus products of Frankish rural activities. A more plausible explanation would take into account longer periods of time between the visits of merchants and search for their destination in urban settlements, particularly the markets of the western Frankish kingdom,

which were on the rise from the beginning of the seventh century onwards. In these areas, one might expect to obtain a good price and high demand for Mediterranean goods. The subsequent re-distribution of the objects from these central locations is an issue that cannot be discussed here, but which needs further research.<sup>121</sup>

From the general outline of contacts between the Merovingian kingdom and the Mediterranean world one can conclude that during this period Central and Western Europe were still a part of a 'globalised' (Byzantine-centred) world in a broad sense. But while contacts of the late fifth and sixth centuries seemed to have been more goal-directed – remembering the efforts of the Byzantine emperors to win the Frankish kings over to their side during the armed conflicts with Ostrogoths and Lombards in Italy – relations became less and less directional from the seventh century onwards, perhaps because the Byzantine Empire was busy with its own existential problems and lost sight of the barbarian kingdoms in the West.

<sup>120</sup> Harris, pp. 175 ff..

<sup>121</sup> See: Drauschke, *Zwischen Handel und Geschenk*, p. 366.