

UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HISTORY

MEDIEVAL STUDIES PROGRAMME

**Telling Objects, Telling Costumes**

**Contributions to the Chronology and Brooch Costume  
of the Lombard Period in the Central Danube Region Based on Female Graves  
from the 6th Century AD in Pannonia**

Abstract of doctoral (PhD) thesis

by

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Szeged

2025

## **Choice of topic, objectives**

In the present dissertation, my aim was to process the archaeological material of the Pannonian Lombard period (6th century AD) using a contemporary typochronological approach, and to describe the types of brooch (fibula) use and wearing styles. Accordingly, the primary sources of the research were female graves from the period. In Hungarian archaeology, the analysis of the regional and chronological characteristics of the archaeological material – along with aligning the region with international research standards – has long been overdue. This demand has been recognized since the development of modern (Merovingian) chronological systems.

The area under study is the former Roman province of Pannonia, which was bordered by the Danube to the north and east, the Sava River to the south, and the Eastern Alps to the west—beyond which lay the former province of Noricum. In terms of current political boundaries, the study area includes the Transdanubian region of Hungary and parts of northeastern Lower Austria, both located south of the Danube. The western boundary of the research area lies in the Vienna Basin, south of the Alps and also on the right bank of the Danube.

The period under study corresponds to the 6th-century row cemetery horizon associated with the Merovingian culture. It followed the Hunnic horizon of the 5th century AD and ended with the withdrawal of a portion of the Lombard population in 568 AD, coinciding with the emergence of Early Avar cemeteries. However, this date does not imply that no Lombard locally remaining population existed during the Early Avar period.

The primary chronological sources were female burials, since small and bow brooches serve as key chronological markers, as suggested by Merovingian archaeological research. This group of artefacts has been analysed in detail both in individual typological studies and in regional assemblages for the period, but remains unexamined within the Carpathian Basin. Therefore, the first step was the systematic collection and cataloguing of female burials in Pannonia.

The reason for choosing this area is that, while other regions of the Central Danube Basin (Bohemia, the Moravian Basin, and northern Lower Austria) have already been studied with regard to their regional and chronological characteristics of the Merovingian period, such research is lacking for Pannonia. Furthermore, the topic is important because the publication status of Lombard sites from the early 20th century remains unsatisfactory.

The Lombard kingdom of Pannonia is closely connected to the Bohemian Basin, Moravia, and Lower Austria. Based on current knowledge, the cemeteries north of the Danube are not clearly distinguished

chronologically or geographically from those south of the river, except that the northern region had already been under Lombard occupation. Female burials on the north side of the river were excluded from the study corpus solely because several regional typochronological summaries of these burials already exist, and I deemed it unnecessary to repeat them. However, the finds from these graves have been presented as analogues of the related Pannonian archaeological types, with the aim of completeness wherever possible. In this way, this thesis can serve a complementary role in the series of typochronological works covering the Lombard and Migration Periods of the Central Danube Basin.

## **Sources and Methods of Data Collection and Processing**

I catalogued female graves from already published Lombard row cemeteries in Pannonia. Graves were selected primarily based on anthropological sex determinations, in cases where such assessments were unavailable, classification was based on gender-specific grave goods. I included all burials that were definitively female and contained at least one identifiable costume-related item. In the absence of gender determination, burials with at least one gender-specific find were also catalogued. The catalogue further includes stray finds or unprovenanced objects that could be reliably associated with the Lombard period and female burials—most of these being brooches.

The collection and analysis were hampered by several factors:

One major obstacle to the research was the lack of published data and the absence of up-to-date documentation for previously excavated sites, particularly in relation to current methodological standards. An additional difficulty in the Central Danube Basin is the extremely high rate of secondary grave disturbances, which can reach 90–100% in some cemeteries. While a few undisturbed burials still exist in Pannonia, this is generally not the case in the Bohemian-Moravian Basin or in Lower Austria. A further significant limitation has been the lack of anthropological analysis: in most cases, neither the sex nor the age of the individuals has been determined.

Based on the criteria outlined above, 26 Lombard-period cemeteries in Pannonia were included in the catalogue, representing a total of 183 female burials. As a control group, female graves from other parts of the Central Danube Basin were also recorded using the same criteria. Altogether, 79 sites are included in the catalogue, either as Langobard-period female burials or as find types associated with females in the Central Danube Basin. Of these, 57 can be classified as row cemeteries (with either a large or small number of graves) or as smaller burial sites with only a few graves.

The distribution of female graves in the other two regions is as follows: 51 graves from 13 cemeteries in the Bohemian Basin, and 159 graves from 18

cemeteries in the Moravian Basin and northern Lower Austria. Including sites that are not yet published, these numbers—especially for the Moravian Basin and Lower Austria—are likely to be significantly higher. In Pannonia, a large proportion of the graves are secondarily opened and disturbed (75 in total), representing 41% of all female graves. Burials with unknown disturbance (62 in total) represent 38% of all female burials. The number of undisturbed burials in the region is surprisingly high (44 in total), representing 24% of all graves.

## **Methodology**

The thesis begins with an overview of the research history and methodology. In Chapter 2.1, *Research History of the Lombard Migration*, I present a brief outline of the Lombards' history up to their arrival in the Central Danube Basin. Chapter 2.2, *Archaeology of the Lombard Period in Pannonia*, discusses the main archaeological questions and challenges in the region, including chronology, external contacts, and social structure. Chapter 2.3, *Collection Methodology*, provides a detailed description of the data collection process.

The largest portion of the thesis is devoted to a separate analysis of the artefact types. The main focus lies on the typological classification of the artefacts, the identification of stylistic features serving as chronological reference point, and the chronological ordering and categorization of the material. This analysis is presented in Chapter 3, *Artefact Types in Pannonian Female Costume*, based on a defined set of criteria.

The analysis of the finds is based on the chronology (Chapter 4.1 *Chronology*) and the brooch-costume (Chapter 4.2 *Costume*). In the latter, both the types of the brooches and their wearing styles are significant from regional and chronological perspectives. These features may also reflect different expressions of identity. For this reason, I considered it to be important to compare the elements and modes of costume and burial customs. This comparative approach was also applied in statistical analyses aimed at identifying potential groupings of female burials based on the combination of costume elements and burial practices (Chapter 4.3, *Attempts to Group Female Burials According to the Composition of Costume Elements and Burial Customs*).

## **Results**

### **Typology**

The finds from the Pannonian female graves (Chapter 3) were classified according to the function of the objects, resulting in the following groups: the brooches (1.), which consisted of the small and bow brooches, the various

types of jewellery (2.), including earrings, neck jewellery, bracelets and rings, as well as antler combs (3) and pins (4). Belt buckles (5), elements of the belt hanger (6) and footwear (7), which were found on the lower part of the body, formed separate groups. In the classification, elements of the belt hanger comprised the majority of object types, which were further categorised by function and material as follows: belt buckles (6.1), decorative pendants or beads (6.2), spindle whorls (6.3), knives (6.4), clips (6.5), iron scissors (6.6), filter spoons (6.7), keys (6.8), metal pendants (6.9), objects of animal origin (6.10), old artefacts (6.11), convex bronze plate (6.12). Within each group, distinct object types were developed based on typological principles.

The artefact types are described according to a common set of criteria. First, the main stylistic features were outlined, followed by an attempt to compile a comprehensive range of analogues from the Lombard period of the Middle Danube Basin, as well as from the Gepidic and Early Avar periods in the Carpathian Basin, and the Merovingian region. This included documenting stylistic changes in the artefacts over time. I was able to expand the range of artefact types by identifying numerous new analogues previously unknown or uncited, as well as introducing new object types not recognized in earlier research. These are described in the relevant chapters, though a detailed discussion of each falls beyond the scope of this thesis. The typological results served as the primary basis for establishing an absolute chronology. For each chronological phase, it was possible to identify characteristic decorative styles and artefact combinations.

## **Chronology**

The statistical methods applied for chronological analysis – correspondence analysis, seriation – did not yield adequate results due to the limited number of female graves and the relatively small quantity of associated finds. Therefore, the chronology was established using previously developed absolute chronological systems from the Middle Danube region and from the Merovingian period, based on a total of 87 dateable burials.

The proposed phase boundaries are as follows:

*Phase 1: 480/90-520/30, Phase 2: (510)520/30-540/50, Phase 3: 540/50-560/80, Phase 4: 560/80-600.*

Undisturbed graves and corresponding stray finds were also assigned to the phases. The phases should be understood in such a way that their initial dates indicate the earliest possible occurrence of each artefact type, and thus the earliest potential date of the burial assemblage. Although the main period of use for some artefact types could be determined based on analogies, this does not imply that their use was restricted exclusively to that period. The phases do not reflect settlement dates; rather, they provide the earliest possible

dating for the costume assemblages, while the actual period of use or deposition remains approximate. I also aimed to illustrate the chronological position of find complexes by presenting them in order within the relevant chapters, and to describe the characteristics of each assemblage phase by phase. The chronology established is not only applicable to Pannonia, but also to the wider Central Danube Basin.

The established chronology makes it possible to trace stylistic developments in brooches and certain other object types in the region. It also reveals both external influences and internal developments within Lombard-period material culture, as well as changes in artefact combinations and costume practices.

The earliest Lombard-period finds (Phase 1) were characterised by features and artefact types associated with the Middle German Thuringian tradition, Late Antiquity, provincial Roman culture, and the 5th-century Middle Danube horizon. In Pannonia, certain types of bow brooches of Middle German (Thuringian) origin – such as the pincer type and the bird-ornamented types – appeared in specific sites. These brooch types developed or evolved in the Bohemian-Moravian Basin. Among the early forms were “Danube-type” bow brooches with rhomboid footplates, spiral decoration, and gem inlays. Among the small brooches, the earliest north-Danubian and “Thuringian” S-shaped brooches were also typical. Their chronology is not always directly applicable to the Pannonian region, as many of them may already have been in use by the mid-5th century AD in the western Meroving culture. Early western Merovingian forms are also known, such as bow brooches with rectangular or trapezoidal footplates, as well as bird-shaped and disc-shaped small brooches. In the Merovingian world, some of these types remained in use for an extended period – up to 100–150 years – making them less reliable as chronological indicators in this context. Some jewellery types, such as earrings with polyhedron closures, bracelets, pins, and rings, probably developed under local provincial influence. Their dating is also uncertain, as some variants were already in use as early as the fourth century AD. The Lombard period in this region saw the emergence of the continuous use of belt hangers, together with their characteristic artefact types—oval-ringed iron buckles, iron knives, and decorative pendants.

The find complexes assigned to Phase 2 included, as in Phase 1, both small and bow brooches of the North-Central Danube type, along with the precursors of later S-shaped brooches, which may be interpreted as either local products or imports. The early western Merovingian horizon is further enriched by disc-, bird- and rhombus-shaped small brooches, as well as bow brooches with rectangular or trapezoidal footplates.

The significance of this phase lies in the emergence of Lombard metalwork north of the Danube, characterised by the later distinctive formal

features and decorative styles. The morphological traits, stylistic elements, and combination of techniques observed in the bow brooches suggest an evolution from earlier Central German Thuringian and Central Danube provincial forms, alongside additional western Merovingian and provincial influences. In the Danube region, decoration of bow brooches was primarily limited to engraving. Series of brooches produced according to the same pattern and size indicate a unification of styles and designs, contrasting with the polychromy typical of the 5th century AD. Some stylistic features were “inherited” from Danubian-type examples dating to the latter half of the 5th century AD and from Central Germany (itself shaped by Danubian influences). These include the semi-circular headplate with separately mounted knobs and the oval footplate, originally closed by a simple single-jointed profiled animal head. Ornamentation was also inspired by these sources, with common motifs such as the stepped braid pattern on the footplate and a string of triangles with niello inlays along the edges and centre line of the bow.

By this period, the rectangular headplate, likely of western Merovingian origin, began to appear, often decorated with buttons moulded integrally with the headplate. Alongside the predominance of engraving, some bow brooch types also retained the earlier tradition of gem inlay decoration.

In the case of the S-shaped brooches, the characteristic depiction of birds of prey emerged at the beginning of the 6th century AD, largely supplanting earlier animal figures with snake-like bodies and open mouths or beaks. The development of these earlier motifs cannot be clearly traced in the later period.

Overall, the dating of brooch types assigned to Phase 2 is often uncertain for the region, not only due to chronological difficulties but also because of the prolonged period during which each type was in use. Consequently, it is not always possible to attribute precise dating to the object types placed in Phase 2.

The beginning of Phase 3 can be dated to around the middle of the 6th century AD, or to the one or two decades preceding it. Brooches characteristic of Phase 3 appeared almost exclusively in Pannonia, and only sporadically north of the Danube. For this reason, Phase 3 can be considered the best-represented phase within the Pannonian settlement area. This is demonstrated by the dominance of locally produced metalwork – particularly brooches – in female dress, reflecting the consolidation and expansion of local craftsmanship in the previously described stylistic traditions (provincial, Central German/Thuringian, and western Merovingian).

Owing to chronological uncertainties in Pannonian research, the appearance of classical Animal Style I has remained questionable. It is well known that the antecedents of the Scandinavian Nydam and Animal Style I traditions were already visible in earlier phases, particularly on some brooches

from the North-Central Danube region during the first third of the 6th century AD. However, only in Pannonia do we find a locally developed, classical form of the Style I, primarily represented by bow brooches. There is no reason to date these in Pannonia earlier than the mid-6th century AD (c. 540/550). This dating is supported by independently dated associated find – such as small brooches and other grave goods – as well as the datable morphological features and decorative motifs of the bow brooches, all of which are discussed in detail in the relevant chapters on artefact types and chronological phases.

In Phase 3, the transformation of earlier (Phase 2) local bow brooches can be observed. New types emerged within this stylistic tradition, retaining several fundamental features of their predecessor. A recurring motif is the two- or three-part animal head enclosing the oval footplate, characterised by almond-shaped eyes with multiple eye-frames, a prominent Y-shaped line, and a semicircular ‘tongue’, sometimes decorated with dotted motifs. By the mid-6th century AD, the square braid pattern commonly found on the footplates was largely replaced by a double-banded meander braid. Although, variants of the meander motif can be observed both on western Merovingian types and on locally produced pieces. Another typical feature of Pannonian brooches from this period is the increasingly plastic modelling of the animal heads flanking the footplate, often depicted with extended jaws. The semi-circular headplate was framed with a growing number of buttons (seven or eight), which also became larger in size. These double-knobbed elements were attached to a thin, semicircular base plate. In this period, the animal-headed footplate closures typical of the Upper Danube region or the western Merovingian knob types were common; in the case of the latter, from the early Merovingian period, the knobs with ribbed bottoms, which were used on the rectangular headplate and merged together with it.

The local S-shaped brooches retained the bird-of-prey motif from Phase 2, though with a more elongated body. It was during this phase that Animal Style I decoration was applied. In addition, western Merovingian, Upper Danube and southern German influences can be seen in S-shaped brooches featuring full-body cloisonné inlay. Evidence for their local production is also present. Among the small brooches, imported disc brooches with almandine inlays remained common, as did S-shaped brooches originating from earlier phases.

Phase 4 encompasses the finds from the final third of the 6th century AD and is similar in character to Phase 3. The cemetery assemblages include S-shaped brooches with almandine inlay and Animal Style I decoration, as well as paragraph-shaped brooches, which are characteristic of cemeteries in northern Italy. Among the bow brooches, typologically more advanced examples of Animal Style I appear, featuring higher number of knobs (typically 9-10), a form also well represented in Italy. Animal Style II, which spread from



the Mediterranean, began to appear both in Italy and in the Carpathian Basin during the Early Avar period. In Pannonia, examples of this style occur in the latest phases of some cemeteries, represented on certain types of both bow and S-shaped brooches.

In the final phase of the cemeteries, not only the late Merovingian, Upper Danube, and northern Italian (impact) type of brooches are recognisable, but also certain types of pendants. Single-row combs with paired animal-heads – developed either through local innovation or under western Merovingian influence – are likewise characteristic of the last third of the 6th century in row cemeteries. Among the belt fittings, late Merovingian multi-piece iron belt sets appear, long with elongated rectangular iron buckles, typical of both the late western Merovingian tradition and the Early Avar period. Similar artefact types from the West include bronze and ivory rim fittings from pouches, which became fashionable in the final third of the century, as well as so-called reticella beads.

Within the Merovingian world, insufficient information is available regarding the workshops that produced brooches, and firm conclusions about their local or imported origin can only be drawn through a detailed examination of production technology. However, in the early phases (Phases 1–2), there are instances of bow brooches that are not comparable with either North Danubian or Pannonian types, as they developed within a different stylistic tradition and lack local antecedents. These include western Merovingian brooches with rectangular or trapezoidal footplates. In such cases, the possibility of importation must be considered. In north-west Pannonian burials, these brooches were often found in association with small inlaid brooches, which have previously been proven – on technological grounds – to have been imported into the region.

In the later phases (Phase 3–4), it becomes more evident that certain decorative elements “migrated” into Pannonia. These are most commonly associated with the Upper Danube–Alamannic and Frankish–Bavarian regions, and, in Phase 4, increasingly with northern Italy. In the latter, Lombard material became interwoven with the late-period finds and stylistic features of the southern Germanic world, as well as decorative motifs typical of the Mediterranean. Moreover, some artefacts—particularly from Phase 4—were likely imported from northern Italy and southern Germany, reflecting the existence of an extensive contact network in Pannonia towards the end of the Lombard period.

I would argue that while early western imports were primarily intended to fill the gap in local brooch production during the transitional period preceding the emergence of an independent goldsmithing tradition, later—particularly in the context of high-status female burials—such contacts may reflect the versatility and far-reaching communication networks of the elite.

The imported items that appear in the earlier phases likely represent a different kind of interaction, perhaps more functional or opportunistic in nature. This shift may also be explained by the consolidation of Lombard power in the region during the latter part of the 6th century AD, which enabled more sustained connections with the southern Germanic world and, following the migration, with northern Italy. Nonetheless, the fundamental differences observed among brooch types may also be attributed to chronological factors, as the second half of the 6th century AD is more strongly represented in the archaeological record of the region.

The description and evaluation of the phases outlined above indicate that the cemeteries of north-western Pannonia may represent the earliest traces of the Lombard settlement in the Carpathian Basin. These cemeteries contain finds corresponding only to Phases 1 to 3, and in many cases can be dated no later than Phases 1 and 2. The archaeological evidence thus clearly points to an early Lombard presence in the region, dating from the early 6th century AD. This interpretation aligns with the view of P. Tomka, who previously suggested that the sites around the Hegykő may predate the other Pannonian cemeteries located further east and south. It also concurs with the analysis of I. Koncz, who – based on chronological considerations – linked the so-called “Hegykő group”, as named by I. Bóna, with the settlement area of Lower Austria.

Based on the chronology of the female graves, it can be inferred that the occupation and expansion of the settlement area, likely proceeded later towards the east and south. However, it remains unclear whether this expansion occurred simultaneously or successively – first to the east, then to the north-east, and finally to the south. Given the larger number of graves found at Bezenye, Várpalota, and Szentendre cemeteries, it is plausible that the initial expansion was towards the east and north-east, areas closer to their previous settlement zone. The Bratislava–Rusovce site is also thought to be connected to this group; however, without comprehensive material, no definitive conclusion can be drawn.

In both the north-eastern and southern cemeteries (Szentendre, Várpalota, Tamási, Kajdacs, Vörs), where the number of graves is relatively high, the finds date from Phase 2 -4. However, the Phase 2 is chronologically uncertain within the local Lombard context, due to frequent secondary grave openings and the predominance of artefacts with long periods of use. For example, at Tamási, a single burial dated to Phase 1 was found, but this is not regionally significant as the grave contained a type of brooch already common in the second half of the 5th century AD. It is therefore safer to date the earliest large cemeteries to Phase 3, which also corresponds to the most intensive period of cemetery use across the region. Most cemeteries also contain finds dating to the final third of the 6th century and beyond, indicating use continuing after the Lombard period. The representation of Phases 3 and 4

increases towards the south, as demonstrated by the assemblages from the cemeteries of Gyöng, Kajdacs, and Vörs, which are among the longest-used Lombard row cemeteries.

The cemeteries with small number of graves located in the north-east and south (Budapest-Vályog u., Kápolnásnyék, Rácalmás, Gyöng), all date to the late Pannonian Lombard period, specifically Phases 3 and 4. These sites likely represent the survival of small communities, although their exact nature and status remain uncertain.

In the light of these considerations, the issue of Lombard settlement in Pannonia warrants careful discussion. I. Bóna's thesis on the dating of Pannonian cemeteries has become controversial, as he attempted to address the question of Lombard settlement primarily through historical sources rather than the chronology of archaeological finds. Based on the numerous cemeteries in northern Pannonia, Bóna originally proposed an early settlement date around 510 AD, in the early 6th century. However, it is now widely accepted that the typological categories he established do not necessarily withstand scrutiny in view of newly discovered sites and modern chronological methodologies employed in the twenty-first century. Some archaeologists and historians have argued that Pannonia was only occupied after the death of Theoderic in 526 AD. W. Pohl, however, has suggested that the Lombards may have respected the Ostrogothic control over Pannonia Savia until at least until the outbreak of the Gothic War of 535 AD, and that there is no clear evidence of Lombard control over northern Pannonia before the Gothic defeat of 540 AD, or possibly only shortly before this date.

In my opinion that the latter assumption is supported by the archaeological evidence, as the earliest finds can only be dated to the transition between Phases 2 or 3, or to the very beginning of Phase 3 – around the mid-6th century, or a few decades earlier (c. 530/540 AD). An exception to this is the north-western Pannonian group, whose chronology closely parallels that of the Lower Austrian-Moravian cemeteries situated close to the Danube, on the border with Noricum. The cemeteries located east and south of this area show no archaeological evidence for earlier use before the second third of the 6th century AD, based on the chronology of the female graves established above. This is especially evident in the southern regions, where Phases 3 and 4 dominate.

Related to the chronological issues is I. Bóna's hypothesis that southern Pannonia was conquered by a second wave of Lombard settlement around the middle of the 6th century AD. According to this view, it is plausible that groups living north of the Danube or advancing west of Pannonia gradually moved eastwards and southwards. However, from an archaeological perspective, it is difficult to distinguish the precise timing of cemetery openings, and thus the phases of occupation. It seems likely that the south experienced settlement by

peoples with a different cultural background compared to the north-western region. For example, a community with strong North Danubian traditions may have settled in southern Pannonia after the second third of the 6th century AD. Nonetheless, this does not clarify what kinds of communities moved into other parts of Pannonia, and neither the chronology nor other archaeological evidence justifies identifying the southern Pannonian communities explicitly as a “second wave” of settlement. This point is particularly important given that some cemeteries in northern Pannonia appear to have been established relatively late according to the chronology of female graves, suggesting the presence of late, smaller, or newly settled groups. Overall, the gradual expansion of the settlement area can be well traced based on female grave evidence, but it remains difficult to clearly separate the chronological dynamics of occupation.

The third chronological issue concerns the survival of the Lombards in the Carpathian Basin after 568 AD. In this thesis, the assemblage of objects dating to the final third of the 6th century AD has been further expanded to include various types of brooches, jewellery, and belt buckles. These Phase 4 artefacts provide evidence of a late Lombard presence spread throughout the entire territory of Pannonia.

### **Brooch-costume**

For further analysis, although the wearing of each object is discussed in the respective chapters, a comprehensive study of wearing practices could only be conducted for brooches. I have developed chapters summarising the research history of brooches, their evolution, interpretations of bow brooches, and possibilities for their reconstruction. These were followed by an analysis of the position of Lombard Period brooches and the age-related variations in costume, evaluated from both regional and chronological perspectives. Of the 183 female burials catalogued in Pannonia, 77 graves were suitable for analysis, 31 of which were found to be undisturbed.

Costumes can be distinguished in several ways: by the number of brooches, their combinations, their positions within the burial, and their chronology. Nine clothing modes can be identified based on the number of brooches. By combining some of these modes, I have been able to group them according to the position and number of brooches, which reflect actual wearing patterns and types of clothing:

- Costume fastened by one or two small brooches on the upper body (Modes 1 and 4);
- Costume fastened by two bow brooches on or near the shoulders and a small brooch on the upper body (Mode 3);

- Costume fastened by one or two bow brooches on the lower body (Modes 8 and 9);
- Costume fastened by a combination of small and bow brooches (Modes 2, 3 and 5);
- Four-brooch costumes (two small and two bow brooches) (Mode 6).

In conclusion, the female brooch costume of the Lombard period appears largely uniform, undergoing transformation from the final third of the 5th century to the end of the 6th century AD, in accordance with Merovingian fashion, with various versions appearing across Pannonia. The variants (or models) are defined by their number rather than by their position, that is, their function within the costume. Small brooches consistently appeared on the upper body, around the neck and chest, while bow brooches were always found in the area between the pelvis and the thighs. Over time, it is observable that bow brooches, initially positioned in the pelvic region, were worn progressively closer to the knees. This mode of wearing brooches, alongside the characteristic belt loop, is also evident in newly uncovered Early Avar, Germanic, and Merovingian burials in the Carpathian Basin. However, the varying ways of wearing bow brooches (e.g. on both shoulders) reflect the transformation of contemporary fashion, influenced by external (Byzantine, Crimean?) contacts.

The presence of different clothing types, that is, varying brooch combinations, may reflect temporal and regional differences, as well as age and status-related factors connected to social roles. In some cemeteries, certain costume modes are more concentrated and thus better suited for study. One such mode is the wearing of bow brooch(es) in the pelvic region, the emergence of which can be linked to the transformation of costume—from the "peplos" to the "tunica"—that occurred after the mid-5th century AD. This practice can also be traced in earlier Lombard settlements north of the Danube during the second half of the 5th century AD, as well as in post-Hunnic cemeteries of Pannonia, the Upper Danube region, and the Rhineland.

In Pannonia, bow brooches worn on the pelvic area first appeared in the earliest north-western row cemeteries, primarily at Hegykő. By the earliest finds, we refer to rectangular footplate bow brooches worn similarly around the pelvic region as seen throughout the western Merovingian sphere during the Early Merovingian period. This may indicate chronological reasons for the presence of this model in the region under study. However, the community identified in previous research as the "Hegykő group" did not adopt the practice of wearing bow brooches between the thighs even in the second half of the 6th century AD, unlike other Pannonian communities. This suggests that they preserved their own community traditions, reflected in their costume, while simultaneously adopting contemporary fashions in other aspects of dress, such

as small brooches and belt loops. Therefore, the explanation cannot rest solely on chronology, regional variation, or different relationship networks; it may also reflect social separation or the expression of a preserved local identity.

In Tamási, bow brooches worn near the pelvis were only occasionally found, which is unsurprising for a community with strong traditions linked to the former North Danube region. This phenomenon, together with certain individual artefact types, reinforces the connection with the Lombard and Thuringian cultural milieus of the North-Central Danube and Central Germany.

Investigating the age-related patterns of brooch possession during the Langobard period is challenging due to the scarcity of reliable age data and the disturbed condition of many graves. Existing data suggest that girls may have worn small brooches from infancy (*infans* I), while bow brooches (with some exceptions) were generally acquired only during adolescence (*juvenis*), potentially linked to marriageability, fertility, and the transition to adulthood. It was also within this age group that the first four-brooch sets appeared. As individuals reached adulthood and maturity, the number of brooches tended to increase gradually, peaking in this phase with the greatest variety and highest frequency of four-brooch ensembles. Towards old age, these numbers gradually declined. In both the infant and elderly groups, neither combinations of small and bow brooches nor four-brooch outfits were observed. This pattern parallels observations made in the western Merovingian region.

The age dependency of the possession of grave goods, including brooches, can be interpreted as reflecting the representation of social roles within the burial context, whereby individuals expressed their social status through their attire. Accordingly, children and the elderly had either not yet attained or no longer occupied the social positions held by adults. For women, the most prominent expression of this role was marriage and childbearing, which were symbolised through their jewellery—particularly their bow brooches.

In addition to the age-related presence of brooches, it should be noted that the majority of juvenile and adult individuals were buried with brooches dating to around the mid-6th century AD, whereas from maturity onwards—especially in the elderly group—brooches from earlier phases were more commonly found, indicating that older women were interred with earlier types. These items may have been acquired or highly prized when the women were younger, or the burial community (such as the family) may have “withdrawn” these jewels, or the women might have passed on their more recently acquired pieces during their lifetime. It is, however, impossible to establish the exact date of death of these individuals, or whether they would have had the opportunity to obtain more “modern” types of brooches.

## Society

The comparison of costume element combinations with burial customs provided an additional perspective for investigating the local Lombard-period horizon (Chapter 4.3). The aim was to explore how social differentiation was expressed in female graves of the Pannonian Lombard period, using various statistical methods.

The most effective means of learning about past societies – albeit in a limited way – is through cemeteries. These serve as primary sources for examining aspects such as community structure, social composition, customs, beliefs, and religion. In Hungarian archaeology, the social classification proposed by I. Bóna has remained central to the discussion. At the same time, questions of social composition are closely tied to the so-called “Hegykő group” and, by extension, to the issue of the Romanised population and the methods by which they can be identified.

Although we may not have and will not have the archaeological methods to identify the different layers of the society recorded in writing by the combination of burial rites and finds, there have been many attempts in Western Europe and Hungary to understand the structure of the communities of the period. In this thesis, I have interpreted the funerary rites, find combinations and brooch-costume recorded from female graves in the context of the chronology developed. I tried to reflect on the two topics (social structure, presence of Romanised people) with the help of statistical methods commonly used in archaeology (correspondence, PCA, seriation). A major obstacle to the research was the very small number of undisturbed, closed find assemblages.

The results clearly confirmed the presence of age-based differentiation within society. Among the findings of the analysis, it was possible to examine and interpret the most distinctive phenomena—those elements representing extreme values (individual graves or groups of graves). Two distinct groups emerged:

In Group I, burials without grave goods or with a much simpler composition of costume elements—sometimes containing only jewellery—formed a relatively closed group. These graves were found primarily at the cemetery of Hegykő, where not only the youngest children but also adults and elderly individuals were buried in this manner. The analysis showed that this phenomenon cannot be explained by age-related social distinctions or chronological differences. The distinctive combinations of grave goods and funerary practices may instead reflect a local identity, maintained by the community through specific traditions. This local isolation is further supported by observations on brooch-wearing: in this cemetery, brooches were

consistently worn around the pelvic area, even after the mid-6th century AD. This suggests the persistence of community-specific traditions.

Group II appears to comprise the richly furnished female graves, belonging to individuals who may have held higher social status at the local level, as indicated by the quantity and quality of costume elements and the complexity of the funerary rites. This group clearly illustrates the age-based differentiation, which supporting earlier findings from the western Merovingian and Italian Lombard spheres—namely, that richly furnished burials with complex rites were primarily associated with adult women, particularly those of *adultus* age. The combination of elaborate rite and costume may serve as a strong indicator of their social role.

The richly furnished burials correspond primarily to Phase 3, and occasionally to Phase 4, which are the most characteristic of the Pannonian region. The predominance of Phase 3 graves, along with the increased number of female burials containing representative elements during this period, may also reflect the consolidation of Lombard power in the area.

The transitional values observed between the two groups reflect the complexity and diversity of contemporary society. Several interpretative approaches may be proposed, with specific explanations best provided at the level of individual graves or cemeteries.

In conclusion, this method – like the other analytical approaches employed – does not necessarily enable the clear identification of distinct social groups. However, the identification of distinct patterns facilitates the recognition and analysis of certain phenomena, such as expressions of local identity, age-based differentiation, and modes of representation within the community.



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