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A recently found belt buckle with rune-like signs from Ukraine

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The editors have chosen to publish the article *A recently found belt buckle with rune-like signs from Ukraine* by Maxim Levada and Tineke Looijenga, even though we do not disagree with the two reviewers and their recommendations. Moreover, we appreciate that the authors have written the article and revised it, thus making the find public.

We base our decisions on the following argument.

JAAH is relatively inexpensive to publish and store in open access environments such as DIVA. Its ecological footprints are small and related to public interest in the published material. An article will be accessed or downloaded only when somebody wants to do just that.

JAAH is a journal based upon openness not least in the review process. Reviewers are paid a modest fee and their reviews are published as an invited contribution to the journal. They represent an initial scientific discussion. A reviewer may choose to be published anonymously.

Quality and ranking based on opaque quality criteria and profit are thus alien to JAAH. In the humanities, this position stands out as a reasonable attitude to research because there is very little paradigmatic, let alone objective progress to be made. As long as inter-subjectivity is valued and reasonably source critical readers exist, transparency is the paradigm that makes quality possible.

The article in question is a case in point. The buckle and its inscription is potentially interesting. Nevertheless, the finder who robbed the site of its antiquities probably intentionally blurs its find circumstances. The reason for this may be a matter of profit and/or ideological. How much could the dishonest owner opt the prize of the buckle if its inscription were indeed original? Probably quite a lot, and more than if the runes were showed to be a modern addition to an old buckle.

Since we do not know for sure, a transparent article must be published with an editorial note that concludes in the following way:

UNTIL OTHERWISE PROVED, THE INSCRIPTION ON THE BUCKLE FROM SUKHODIL MUST IN PRAXIS BE TREATED AS A FALSIFICATION. ONLY THE AUTOPSY OF EXPERT RUNOLOGISTS CAN REMEDY THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS.

ABSTRACT

In 2015, a belt buckle (fig. 2a and 2b) was discovered in western Ukraine with a rune-like inscription on the back. The buckle has no known context, but the find spot is between the Ukrainian villages of Sukhodil and Shydlyvtsy (Husiatyn district in Ternopil *oblast*). The buckle was part of an illegal dig and is in private hands. Unfortunately, its whereabouts are unknown. A profound examination of the material and the inscription was therefore not possible. Yet we thought it appropriate to publish this find. According to its style, the buckle can be dated to the early part of the 5th century. In this article the buckle is compared to other buckles from Eastern Europe (Szabadbattyán, Bar, Yalta) and to parallels (Sösdala, Airan/Moult, Untersiebenbrunn) elsewhere in Europe. All buckles are dated to AD 420-440. The archaeological background in section 1 is written by the archaeologist Maxim Levada, while in section 2 the rune-like signs are described and discussed by runologist Tineke Looijenga. Although a transliteration is proposed, an interpretation is still lacking.

KEYWORDS:

Runes; Rune-like signs; Belt buckles; Scandinavia; South-eastern Europe; Gothic/East Gmc.

A recently found belt buckle with rune-like signs from Ukraine

Section 1

By M. Levada

The archaeological background

In 2010, there were reports of a treasure that was discovered in the Bar district (Vinnytsia *oblast'*, Ukraine), and which was subsequently published (Levada 2011). The treasure comprises female ornaments and horse harness details. Some of the finds have direct parallels to the Sösdala collection (Fabech/Näsman 2013: 100-102, Fabech/Näsman 2017: 9-15). The Bar treasure also contained a luxurious solid buckle, the largest and stylistically the most complicated buckle of the finds under study (Fig. 1.1). In my opinion, supported by Jaroslav Tejral, the find from Bar confirms the existence of relations between the Northern Black Sea Area and Scandinavia (Levada 2010, 2013a; Tejral 2011: 329).

The buckles from Bar, Szabadbattyán (Fig. 1.5), and Yalta (Fig. 1.3) form a single stylistic and typological group. The ornamentation of the panels shows the single jewellery technique, combining fine stamping and carving, mercury gilding and *nielloing*. From the composition of the Bar treasure, one has good reason to relate it with the group of Eastern European finds comprising the hoards of Zamość (Fig. 1.6), Kachin (Fig. 1.2) both in south-eastern Poland, and Coşoveni de Jos (in southern Romania). Some finds from Bar have parallels in Sösdala (in the south of Sweden) and other Scandinavian finds in this circle (Fabech/Näsman 2013: 101, Fig. 23). On the other hand, plane silver brooches from the Bar treasure (Levada 2011: Fig. 8,5-9) belong to the type known from the grave in Unteresiebenbrunn (Lower Austria) and other similar assemblages within this group.

Prior to the Bar find, the comparison of the Szabadbattyán buckle with other finds either rested on intuition or remained tentative. Although the pattern of a cross of vine leaves resembles the ornamentation of the buckle from Airan/Moult (Normandy), (Fig. 1.4), these buckles belong to different types. Parallels with the buckle from the Zamość hoard (Fig. 1.6) were insufficient, being in need of additional argumentation.

It was not until 1960 that a buckle parallel to Szabadbattyán became known in Yalta in the Crimea, just on the Black Sea shore (Fig. 1.3). Found as

a result of construction works, it emerged in a local museum. In 1975, the Crimean archaeologist Igor' Baranov published this find, referring to the Szabadbattyán buckle as its “closest analogy” (Baranov 1975: 272). Following Fettich (1928), Baranov paid attention to the buckle from the Zamość treasure, considering that all these finds belonged to the same circle.¹ The main issue of the Szabadbattyán buckle is that all its researchers use as its only analogy the Airan/Moult buckle of a different type (Fig. 1.4). Both finds have in common the panel ornamentation and metalwork techniques applied to this decoration.



Figure 1. The related buckles: 1. Bar, 2. Kachin, 3. Yalta, 4. Airan/Moult, 5. Szabadbattyán, 6. Zamość, 7. Sukhodil/Shydlyvtsy. <http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1338/Fig1.png>

¹ Discussing the difference in the ornamentation of panels of the buckles from Yalta and Szabadbattyán, Baranov concluded that the first buckle had zones of gilding and that the second is solidly gilded. This is actually not true: the artisan, applying the paste for *niello*, involuntarily erased the gilding, which was not secured by heating, similarly to what happened to the ornaments from Zamość. Although zonal gilding actually occurs on some finds of this style, the significance of this feature it is not entirely clear.

The belt buckle

Recently, in early 2015, another find in Ukraine emerged (Fig. 2a and 2b, Fig. 3.7). Unfortunately, the object was from an illegal dig, and the buckle remained in private hands. We found out later that its findspot was between the villages of Sukhodil and Shydlyvtsy (Husiatyn district in Ternopil *oblast'*, Ukraine). In the finder's words, it was spotted in a forest, where Roman *denarii* were also found in different years. By all appearances, the same person discovered a hoard of about 170 *denarii* in the same place. The composition of the hoard remains obscure, although it did not contain coins from later than the second half or the late second century AD. The coins were almost unworn, similarly to most coin finds in the Northern Black Sea Area. A find was also made of a metal spoon.

The search for parallels to the Szabadbattyán buckle meets with a number of objective difficulties. The information of chance finds is not always reliable. In cases with finds from a more or less well-defined context, the main problem tends to be a profound merging of styles during the Great Migration Period. Different jewellery traditions – Late Hellenistic Style, *Cloisonné* Style, *Kerbschnitt* Style, Plain Silver Eastern Germanic Style, and Sösdala Style – appear in the same find contexts and sometimes on the same artefacts. Such mutual influences attested over vast areas make unequivocal interpretation almost impossible. Nevertheless, the Northern Germanic stylistic background of this group of ornaments is obvious.

The first publication by Nándor Fettich offered two important observations, which later determined the direction of the search for parallels to this find (Fettich 1928). First, Fettich specified the stylistic similarity of the leaf design on the buckles from Szabadbattyán in Hungary and Airan in Normandy (Fettich 1928: 109). The “treasure” of Airan, or, more precisely, the grave at Moulton, was discovered during construction works in 1874 and published in 1875 (de Robillard de Beaurepaire 1875). Later on, Christian Pilet showed the particular importance of this find for the understanding of general archaeological contexts of the analogies to the Szabadbattyán buckle (Pilet 2006; 2007).

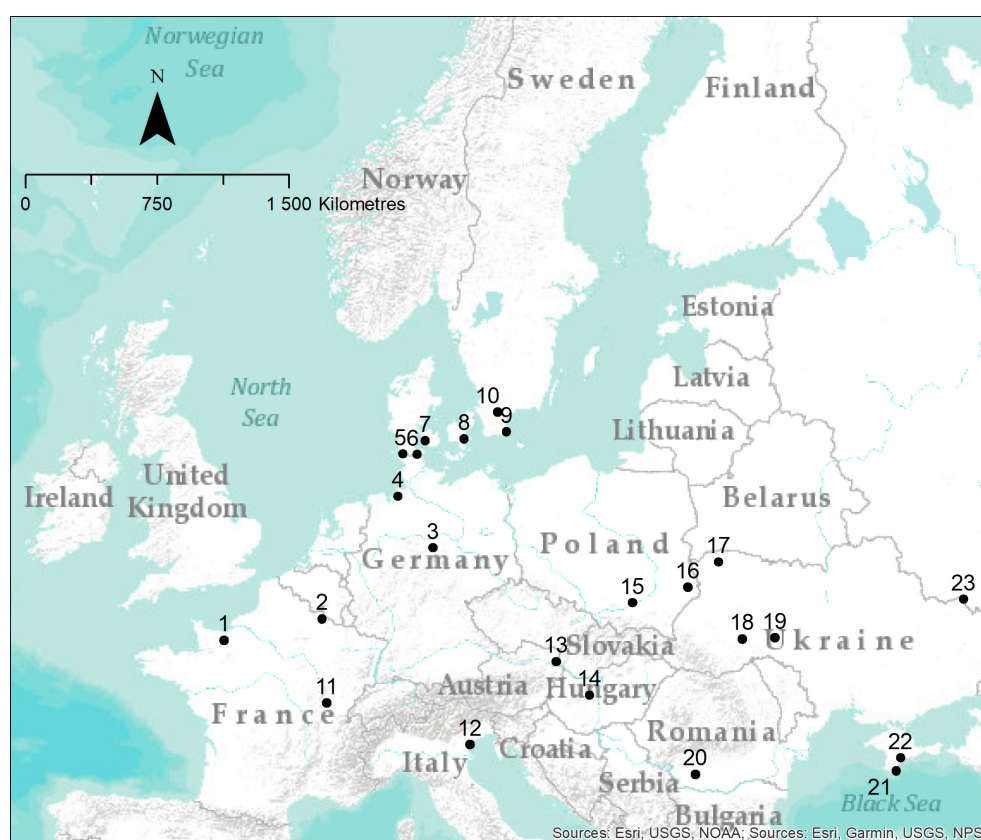


Figures 2a and 2b. The buckle from Sukhodil/Shydlivtsy; above: back with the inscription and below: front. <http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1338/Fig-2a.jpg>
<http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1338/Fig-2b.jpg>

Second, Fettich examined the finds from the treasure of Zamość in Eastern Poland as possible analogies (Fettich 1928: 107). In 1839, this hoard was discovered during construction works in Zamość, which contained, apart from other finds, 16 silver *siliquae* coins of Constantius II (AD 337–361) minted in 351–355 AD (Sulimirski 1965). The importance of the Zamość find (Fig. 3.6) as an analogy to the Szabadbattyán buckle lies primarily in its location (Map 1). More finds have been discovered in the Eastern European area, about

midway between the North Sea and the Black Sea. Exactly 120 years after the find in Airan/Moult, the entire find collection was studied by Christian Pilet, at that time the Director of the Normandy Museum (*Musée de Normandie*) in Caen.

He pointed out that 160 gold badges from Airan/Moult are parallel to the badges sewn on to a lady's collar in grave 82 in the Crimean cemetery of Luchistoe (Pilet 2006: 256), and that the so-called "gold dress pin" actually was an earring with an unbent hoop, of a widespread Crimean type (Pilet 2006: 256; Khairedinova 2002). Pilet correctly interpreted the direct connection of these ornaments to the Alanic antiquities in the Crimea, although polychrome brooches of the Untersiebenbrunn type were suggestive of the German context of the costume of the "Princess of Moult" (Pilet 2006: 256-257).



Map 1. Findplaces. 1. Airan/Moult, 2. Chéhéry, 3. Beuchte, 4. Fallward, 5. Gallehus, 6. Nydam, 7. Kragehul, 8. Himlingøje, 9. Gårdlösa, 10. Sösdala, 11. Charnay (Charnay-lès-Chalon), 12. Concordia, 13. Untersiebenbrunn, 14. Szabadbattyán, 15. Jakuszowice, 16. Zamość, 17. Kachin, 18. Sukhodil/Shydlivtsy, 19. Bar, 20. Coșoveni de Jos, 21. Yalta, 22. Luchistoe, 23. South-west of the province Belgorod.

<http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1338/Map1.jpg>

Kukharenko's article (1982: 240) drew a very important conclusion concerning the parallelism between the horse-bridle from Kachin and the finds from Central and South-Eastern Europe, such as the grave from Untersiebenbrunn (near Vienna), the grave from Jakuszowice (Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Poland), and the treasure from Coșoveni de Jos (Dolj County,

Romania). With that, he underlined the Kachin bridle's stylistic similarity to that of the Sösdala treasure. This famous treasure of Sösdala (Skåne County, Southern Sweden) was found by chance in 1929. Apart from other artefacts, it contained a great number of precious silver ornaments decorated with fine stamps, carving, mercury gilding, and *nielloing* on flat surfaces (for the history of the find and research, see Fabech/Näsman 2013 and 2017).

Concluding that all the artefacts in the Sösdala Style, including the buckles of the Szabadbattyán circle, fit into the “stylistic group of Untersiebenbrunn,” Tejral clarified the chronology of Stage D2 as 420–440 AD (Tejral 2011, 18).

Despite the disputable attribution of some finds to the “Szabadbattyán Circle,” all of them are stylistically uniform. Owing to the small number of artefacts, one tends to assume that the style did not last for long. Their chronology cannot be narrower than what is now called the “Untersiebenbrunn Stage”. Pilet's conclusion of Crimean and especially Alanic² origin of some ornaments from the grave in Airan/Moult sets off the discussion around the migration of the Vandals and the Alans, which is known mostly from Procopius. “Now the Vandals dwelling around the Maeotic Lake, since they were pressed by hunger, moved to the country of the Germans, who are now called Franks, and the river Rhine, associating with themselves the Alani, a Gothic people”³, as Procopius writes in *De Bello Vandalico* (Proc., BV III:I).

The possible answer is a passage from Jordanes's *Getica*: “Now the Vandals and the Alans, as we have said before, had been dwelling in both Pannonias by permission of the Roman Emperors. Yet fearing they would not be safe even here if the Goths should return, they crossed over into Gaul”⁴ (Jord. 161).⁵

The Alans' and Vandals' stay in Gallia is usually dated to a short period of time, viz. 406-409/410 AD. This date makes the year of 409/410 the *terminus ante quem* of the burial in Airan/Moult. Moreover, it means that the buckle from this grave (similarly to the rest of the grave goods) was made before 409, in contradiction to the chronology of the polychrome brooches from this grave. Pilet dates the burial in Airan/Moult to 420–430, according to the parallels he knew in Central Europe, perhaps a general impression of the Untersiebenbrunn Horizon (Pilet 2006a: 273). Substantial evidence of the

² The Alans were originally an Iranian nomadic pastoral people. They had settled in the region north of the Black Sea when they became involved with westwardly migrating groups pressurized by the Huns. Together with Germanic tribes, they moved westwards, crossed the Rhine in 406 along with Vandals and Suebi, and settled for a while in Gallia.

³ Βανδίλοι δὲ ἀμφὶ τὴν Μαιώτιν ὥκημένοι λίμνην, ἐπειδὴ λιμῶ ἐπιέζοντο, ἐς Γερμανοὺς τε, οἱ νῦν Φράγγοικαλοῦνται, καὶ ποταμὸν Ῥῆνον ἐχώρουν, Ἀλανοὺς ἐταιρಿಸάμενοι, Γοτθικὸν ἔθνος.

⁴ *Nam Wandali vel Alani, quos superius diximus permissu Principum Romanorum in utraque Pannonia residere, nec ibi sibi metu Gothorum arbitantes tutum fore si reverterentur, ad Gallias transierunt.*

⁵ One should take into account that Alans did not participate in the conflict between the Goths and the Vandals, and that the relations between the Goths and the Alans before the Migration Period should be discussed in a specific research context (see for example Levada 2006: 64-65). Therefore, a relatively late chronology of the earring from Airan/Moult is not an argument against this interpretation.

Alans' importance at this time (before 418) was the information offered by Hydatius about the Alans being the Vandals' and Sueves' overlords: "Alani, qui Vandalis et Suevis potentabantur..." (Hyd., Cont. 68).

Back to the circle of ornaments of the Szabadbattyán buckle, it is worth repeating two versions of its attestation south of Scandinavia. Initially I considered them imported directly from the north (Levada 2011). Later on, I tended to suppose that in the first half of the fifth century there was a new migration wave from Scandinavia to modern Volhynia (Levada 2013), where a new power centre emerged for a period of time as prestigious finds of typical North European style suggest. Later, these artefacts penetrated to the Crimea, Middle Danube Area, and Normandy from this centre. Preparing the publication of the Bar treasure, I noticed that the backside of its panel has a scratched pentagram (Fig. 3.2). The same pentagram occurs on the buckle from Yalta (Fig. 3.3). These symbols were made in a manner similar to the inscription on the Szabadbattyán buckle. The conclusion is that all these inscriptions, drawings and lines were made by the buckle-makers, perhaps working in that same centre in Volhynia, before the buckle (or the belt) was sent to their new owners.

Section 2

By T. Looijenga

The inscription

The buckle and its inscription were presented to me by way of an email from Maxim Levada. He asked my opinion as regards the inscription and whether it could be runes. We agreed to publish the find and its inscription together, and to discuss our opinions by mail. We never met, and I have never been able to inspect the object and its graphs.

At first sight, the inscription (Fig. 2) gives the impression of indeed being runic – especially because of the last two characters, the **s** and **o**. However, the first two characters are ambiguous; they look like writing, but are they in fact runes? The other graphs do look more or less runic; they have curved forms as well as straight and angular lines. It is problematic that I could not inspect the inscription, since the object is not available anymore for inspection; it is in private hands and nothing is known about its whereabouts. However, Levada made a number of quite sharp photographs, and we will have to make do with those. This limits the range of features that can be examined. Since we only had to use photographs, we cannot be quite sure how to interpret a line crossing another line, for instance. In addition, of course, the possibility of it being a fraud cannot be ruled out. If Levada is right about Volhynia being the place where the buckle was made and inscribed, we should bear in mind the possible East Germanic character of buckle and inscription.

At any rate, we can say that the maker was not a very skilled rune carver. He or she may have been unaccustomed to carving runes, or any writing at all. However, I am convinced that he/she really made an attempt to carve a text. In order to interpret what might have been written, we should initially regard all characters as runic or rune-like signs (the difference between runic and rune-like is small: runic points to a character that may be a rune;

runes-like points to a sign that looks like something that might be a rune). The carvings may have been made with the point of a knife or another sharp instrument. I assume that the inscription runs from left to right, since the first three characters have been turned to the right. It can however be argued that the text runs from right to left, owing to the impression made by the fifth character – if that is to be taken as one graph. As is usual with runic inscriptions on small metal objects, the script is on the back.

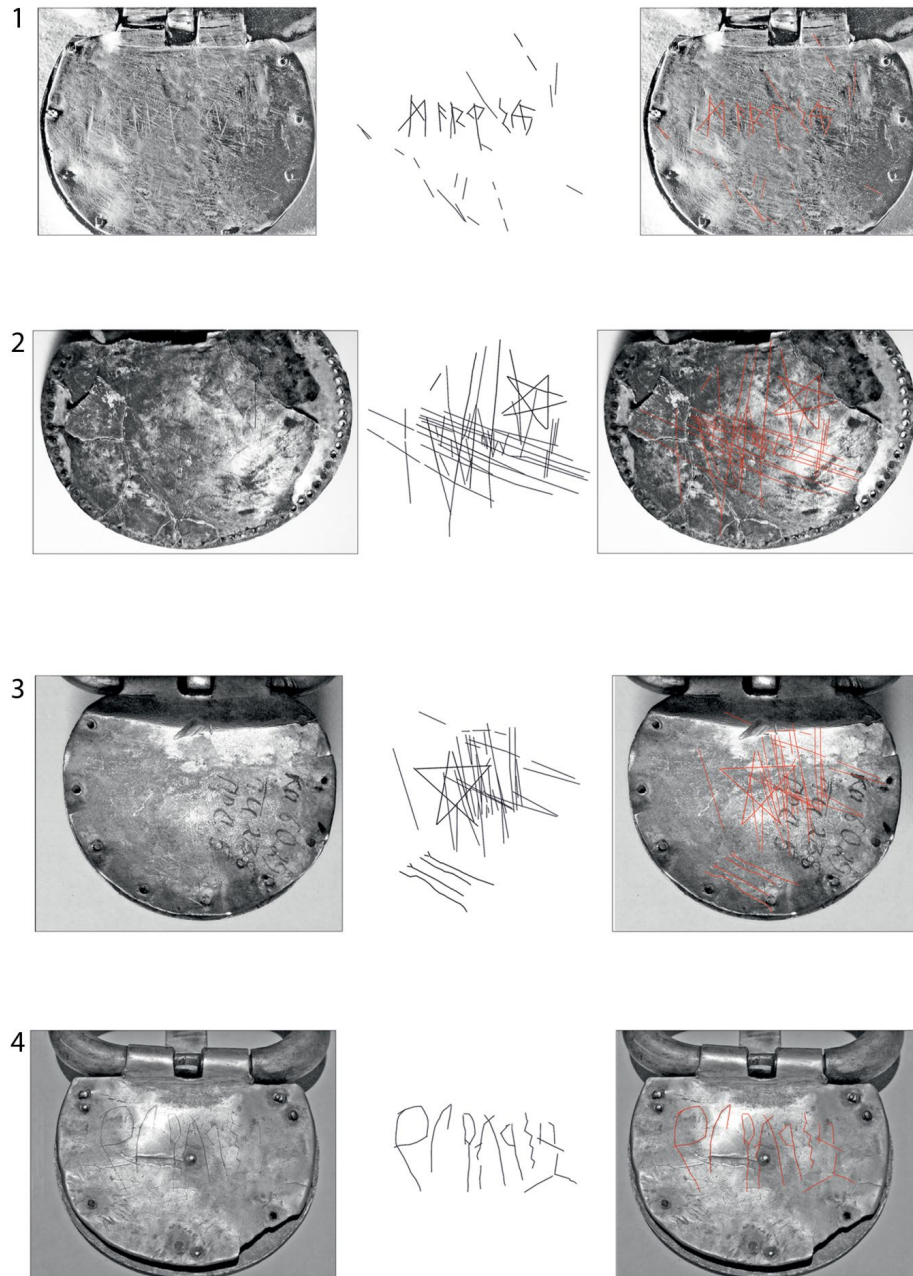


Figure 3. Inscriptions: 1. Szabadbattyán, 2. Bar, 3. Yalta, 4. Sukhodil/Shydlivtsy. Drawings: Maxim Levada. <http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1338/Fig3.png>

The runic and rune-like signs

I will discuss the sequence from left to right. The first character is the most troublesome; it has been carved in a hesitant way in four strokes, all strokes being slightly curved. He/she started with a long stroke from top to bottom, then a short slightly curved line from the top downwards, then a stroke connecting the end of the short stroke to halfway the long stroke and crossing this line. A short stroke to the left of the upper part of the long stroke, but not connected to it, has been added. The whole could be taken for a **w** (or a **p** in the roman alphabet), but I think that it might be a disfigured **o**, the carver using four or maybe five strokes to get this result. The short stroke in the upper left corner looks like an afterthought, adding to the impression that the carver intended to make an **o**. In fact, the sign is a clear parallel to the **o** rune in the inscription of Illerup II, a mount for a shield handle, in the sequence **nipijo tawide**, all undisputed runes (Stoklund 1994: 100, 106f.; Looijenga 2003: 153 and Plate 2). Here the **o** has been executed in three strokes, one from left to right, slanting from the bottom right to upper left, then a short slightly bent stroke to the top and from there one long curved stroke from the top round to the right to bottom left, crossing the first stroke. In fact, it has been executed in rather the same way as the first sign in the Sukhodil buckle. Therefore, I propose to take it as a provisional **o** rune, until somebody comes up with a better suggestion.

Looking carefully, one perceives that the lines constitute small angles. The first long stroke to the left has been carved in two or three parts. I compared this character to the one at the end of the inscription, because that particular one is clearly an **o** as we know it. Did the carver get some assistance there from somebody who knew better how to carve runes? If we take the sequence of strokes as a point of departure when comparing both signs, we see that in both cases the same sequence is followed: first a hook to the left, then a hook to the right, and at last the lower stroke. The first sign has this stroke to the right, the last one to the left. Anyhow, the last part of the inscription seems to have been executed more skillfully than the first part.

If a rune, the second symbol cannot be anything else than an **l** rune. The third symbol is again a difficult one, but if one analyzes the separate strokes that make up the whole character, the most plausible interpretation would be that it is meant to represent a **w** rune. It seems that the long, slightly bent stroke to the right was carved first; this line forms the buckle of the **w**. It was not made in one go from top to bottom since the lower part is not connected to the curved part. This can be seen when magnifying the photograph. Next came the vertical line to the left, followed by the two connecting strokes at the top and halfway down, thus closing the buckle.

The fourth sign has two vertical, slightly bent lines from top to bottom, crossing at the top. Because of the crossing lines, one may consider it to be a **g**, but I would propose to take it as a “tent-shaped” **u**. This shape occurs rather often, but nowhere as far as I know with crossing lines at the top. The fifth symbol seems to be running left, but at a second glance, it consists of several unconnected lines, so I think we are confronted with two runes instead of one. I suggest that the two characters are **k** and **i**. The **k** has the small angular form we know in, for instance, Fallward **ksamella**, Nydam **harkilaz**, Gårdlösa

ekunwodz, Kragehul **ekerilaz**, the Fienstedt comb **kaba** (which, by the way, has a retrograde **k** with crossing lines), Gallehus **ekhlewagastiz** as well as in the Charnay futhark. It looks as if the upper stroke of the **k** is connected by a separate stroke to the top of the **i**, but it does not touch the **i**. I take this to be a *Penprobe*, a stroke that went wrong (too high up) and that the carver rectified it by making a new small stroke slanting downwards. The lower stroke of the **k** sloping right slipped, subsequently touching the **i** rune. One may of course regard the whole feature as a left-running **w** rune, but that makes no sense.

The rune following **i** cannot be anything else than **s**, carved in eight small strokes, executed in three nicely connecting parts, the upper part in two zigzags, the middle part in four zigzags, the lower part in two zigzags. This kind of **s** rune is rare. A six-stroke variant is found on the bow fibula from Himlingøje **hariso** (Krause-Jankuhn 1966 II: Tafel 6); an eight-stroke and a ten-stroke variant are present on the Vimose bronze buckle, reading **aadagasu laasauwija** (Krause 1966:59ff, Tafel 12, nr. 24)⁶.

I suggest that we read the final graph of the Sukhodil inscription as an **o**, in its well-known angular form, carved in several strokes: two separate strokes left and two neatly connecting strokes to the right, with one stroke down to the bottom left. Although this rune seems to be carved more skillfully than the first sign, it has been dealt with in a rather sloppy or careless way.

As a result, we may tentatively transliterate from left to right the inscription as **olwukiso**, but this is far from certain. However, it seems to me the most plausible transliteration. The fact that the sequence ends in *-iso* is very interesting, since it may be compared to **hariso** on the Himlingøje I fibula (fourth century). Another inscription that might have the suffix *-iso* is the sixth century bow-fibula from Beuchte⁷ (Krause-Jankuhn 1966 I: 26-29; II: Tafel 6).

⁶ He reads the text as **a a[n]dag a[n]sula a[n]sau wia** and interpreted this as: “Ase! Den Andag weihe ich, der kleine Ase, dem Asen”). He interprets the text as East Germanic, because of the reconstructed part *a(n)sau* (“got. D.Sg. zu *ansus”) and the possible name A(n)dags: “*Andag* got.A. Sg. M. zu dem ostgot. PN **Andags*” (Krause 1966:60). See also Stoklund (1994: 102). Lena Peterson (1998:556-575) concludes her investigations into the inscription thus: “The interpretations hitherto given are too hazardous to allow any conclusions about its linguistic contents.” (p. 568). Hans Frede Nielsen (1998:551) “The Gothic provenance is questionable (...)”. Lena Peterson (1994:141) is of the opinion that “the interpretation of this inscription [I consider] too hazardous a venture, so I exclude both these names” (Andag and Ansula). The point is, there is no **asau** on the buckle, and no *Andags*, and so I would not declare this inscription East Germanic, nor Gothic. The form **wija** has been dealt with by many runologists (for instance Nielsen 1998:548 and Stoklund 1994:102). Marie Stoklund states in her overview of the early Danish rune finds: “Das Hauptargument für die gotische Deutung ist, daß wija als ein Verb 1. Person Einzahl Präsens gedeutet wird, dies ist aber fraglich, es kann auch ein Name sein (oder Beiname, wie Antonsen behauptet), oder aber die ganze Inschrift ist nicht semantisch verständlich (Moltke 1985:91-93).”

⁷ The Beuchte fibula is a continental imitation of the Scandinavian square-headed brooches as described by Haseloff (1981) and more recently by Højlund Nielsen 2009: 78f.). It belongs to the so-called Great Beast Group, and is dated to 470/80-530 (Højlund Nielsen 2009: 86). It was probably made in a local workshop in Thuringia (Højlund Nielsen 2009: 106). The Himlingøje fibula is of northern European (Scandinavian) typological provenance. Both are without counterparts in south-eastern Europe. The name *Hariso* is known from *Flavius Hariso*, a Herulian veteran, known from an undated, late antique inscription on a sarcophagus from

The inscription reads **buirso** and is mostly taken as **buriso**. “Das Suffix *-(i)so* ist uns als Mittel zur Bildung von germanischen Kurznamen aus alter und neuer Zeit wohl bekannt” (Krause/Jankuhn 1966: 28). Both **hariso** and **buriso** are interpreted as personal names. Antonsen (1975: 35) translates **hariso** as ‘female warrior’, and he transliterates **buirso** as Burisō, ‘little daughter’ (1975: 78). This explanation is however doubted by Nedoma (2004: 264f.) who thinks of a derivation of “urgerm. **būra-* ‘Gebäude’. He gets support from Irene García Losquiño who considers the ending *-iso* not a hypocoristic form, “but rather a derivative suffix for personal name formation that in some cases may reflect Latin *-sus*”. She also links the name *Buirso* to PGmc **bura-* ‘dwelling’ (Losquiño 2015:118f.).

Both Beuchte and Himlingøje I are found as grave gifts in women’s graves. They may be interpreted as male or female names (Lüthi 2003: 327f.). She concludes:

So blieb die Vermutung, daß eine gewisse Variation bestand: Nielsen (2000: 153) sieht *-a* in **lagupewa**, **swart a** als eine maskuline Endung – **a** der *n*- Stämme an, welche vor 200 n. Chr. mit altem *-o* variierte, bis dann nach diesem Zeitpunkt *-o* nur noch für Feminina gebraucht wurde (womit er **lamo**, **lepro** und **hariso** als Frauennamen ansieht).

Lena Peterson (1994: 144f.) states that

there seems to be no other way out than to assume a North Germanic weak masculine nominative in *-ō* are very early. [...] The other two cases that have been under discussion (see Stoklund 1987: 292, 1991: 95), **lepro** Strårup and **hariso** Himlingøje I, have not, to my knowledge, been seriously regarded as masculine forms by anybody except Ottar Grønvik [...].⁸

Some considerations and comparisons

In the recently (2017) published book *The Sösdala Horsemen and the equestrian elite of fifth century Europe*, Kazanski/Mastykova (2017: 297-311) discuss objects from the material culture of mounted barbarian elites from the “Untersiebenbrunn group/horizon” or “Sösdala style”, to which the items described in this article belong. They are part of a “supra-regional” princely

Concordia near Venice, CIL V 8750 = ILS I 2801 and 8988c, labelling *Flavius Hariso* as “magister primus de numero Erolorum seniorum”. As regards the question who made the inscriptions, Levada is of the opinion that all were made by the manufacturers of the buckles in the same workshop. That may be so, but I think that it is clear that the runic inscriptions of Szabadbattyán **marings** and Sukhodil **olwukiso** were *not* made by the same person (Figs 3.1 and 3.4).

⁸ Irene García Losquiño (2015:114) is of the opinion that names ending in *-iso* are masculine, because of the Venetian inscription with the name *Flavius Hariso*. She analyses the possibility that there is no need to accept a metathesis of *r* in the Beuchte inscription, and to proceed with *Buirso* and a possible hypocoristic form *Buir(i)so*, and she proposes this name be derived from **burjaʒ* (2015:116). “The name brings the mythological name *Boreas* into mind, in Greek *Βορέας*, which shares the Indo-European root **bhur-* with **burjaʒ*.” The name would be that of the carver, a man’s name (also Düwel 2001:19).

culture and do not belong to a particular ethnic group. The tombs, treasures and isolated discoveries from Jakuszowice, Kachin, Untersiebenbrunn, Bar and Coşoveni de Jos are attested in the Hun area in Central and Eastern Europe in both nomadic and sedentary environments, according to Kazanski/Mastykova (2017: 305).

We might compare the Sukhodil/Shudlivtsy object to some other early runic finds from Eastern Europe and to some supposedly East Germanic inscriptions. There are not many; first the two spearheads of Rozwadów and Kowel, both dated 3d c. Rozwadów may not be runic at all if I can rely on the picture in Arntz/Zeiss, Tafel XXXVII; Krause included a drawing in his book, after the picture in Arntz/Zeiss. Both read the letters as runic, **krlas**, but only the faint **k** and the **l** might be regarded runes. The object seems to have disappeared. Kowel is very interesting, since it shows some symbols that need not be runes, and there has been much debate (cf. Snædal 2011:234ff., with ref. and a lengthy discussion of the meaning of the inscription and the possibility of it being in Greek lettering). Nevertheless, the favoured reading is **tilarids** with anomalous **T** and **D** (Düwel 2001:31). Other East-European finds of inscriptions are Leţcani, Pietroassa, Aquincum⁹ and Szabadbátyan, but here there are no problematic runes. The reading of the Pietroassa runes, however, has provoked Snædal (2011:238-242) to interpret the text as Old High German and not Gothic. He supposes (p.242) that the “man who inscribed the name [**gutaniowi**, TL] on the ring was perhaps thinking of a woman dear to him, and to her name he added a wish for good health (...)”. This may sound a bit too romantic.

The lance head from Mos, Gotland, may have an East Germanic inscription **gaois** (Krause 1966:80f., Tafel 18), owing to the reading **-is**. Lena Peterson discusses the Mos lance head in her critical survey of alleged East Germanic inscriptions, and states: “It is the **-s** ending that has led scholars to see an East Germanic word in the Mos inscription. But the interpretations differ, and it is not even fully certain that the inscription is complete” (Peterson 2004). Nevertheless, this could as well read **sioag** and there might be runes missing.

Charnay: about the personal name **iddan** in the inscription says Martin Findell (2010:11): “While it is not my intention to attack or defend a particular model of PGmc, the majority opinion does support the interpretation of **iddan** as acc., and as an EGmc type in **/-an/**”. He considers it as a masculine name. In addition, Krause (1966:22) considered Iddan as an East Gmc male name, acc. sg. of Idda. The verb in this inscription is transliterated *u(n)þf(i)npai* ‘möge herausfinden’, got. 3 sg. präs. opt. “wie wir sie aus dem Bibelgotischen kennen”. (Krause 1966:22). The verbform in Charnay, *uþfindai* is considered

⁹ In 2009 I had the opportunity to inspect the Aquincum fibula in the Budapest Museum and it turned out that the upper part of the inscription begins with a very faint **s** rune in four strokes, followed by, as I read it, **laig**, the last rune transliterated as **g** and not **n** as is assumed by Krause (1966:23). It has the same ductus as the **g** in the shortened futhark inscription on the same brooch **fuparkg?**. The sequence I take to be read as **jsl aig kingia** interpreted as **jsl owns (this) brooch** (see also Looijenga 2003:227).

East Germanic (Gothic) too. The other two really East Germanic, or even Gothic, runic objects are then the Szabadbattyán buckle and the Pietroassa gold ring. The Szabadbattyán buckle has an undisputed reading **marings** followed by a sign that most likely is a malformed swastika. It is certainly not a malformed **d** rune, as Krause wanted to have (1966:310). I inspected the buckle in the Nemzeti Múzeum in Budapest, and I could see that first a vertical stroke was executed, then a horizontal stroke, and at last the three sidestrokes thus forming the four-armed swastika (one sidestroke missing from the lower end of the vertical stroke. The extra stroke from the left end of the horizontal stroke was superfluous and clearly a mistake).

Some conclusions

I propose to take **olwukiso** as a name, a personal name or an appellative naming the object, considering the fact that small personal objects with runes often bear names, although I must admit that I have not been able to propose an interpretation. The inscription is not convincingly runic, since some of the symbols may be taken as runes, but some others remain rather enigmatic. Since the buckle stylistically belongs to the Cernjachov culture (3d – 5th c.), the language of the inscription may be East Germanic, but as there is as yet no interpretation, we cannot be sure. An ending *–isō* occurs as a fem./neutr. sg. nom. of the comparative in Gothic (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1973: 86).

All this may not be sufficient evidence for East Germanic knowledge of runes in Ukraine, let alone that at this stage it can be decided whether the Sukhodil brooch carries an East Germanic, Gothic, or whatever Germanic written text. The above-discussed objects make it clear that reading and interpreting of runic inscription is full of obstacles, slings and arrows. In addition, of course, the findplace of portable objects can never be the starting point of any interpretation.

Therefore, first, the Sukhodil brooch must be located and studied by several runologists. However, this seems a long way off. This paper is only meant to publish the find – and to open up discussions. By no means, the propositions forwarded here are to be taken as final.

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