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Almgren Group VII, Series I Brooches in Sarmatian Graves of the North-Western Pontic Region*

Key words: north-western Pontic region, Holmskoe, Hlinaia, Almgren Group VII, Sarmatian graves, typology, cultural transfer.
Cuvinte-cheie: spațiul nord-vest pontic, Holmskoe, Hlinaia, grupul VII Almgren, morminte sarmatice, tipologie, transformare culturală.

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This study examines two Sarmatian graves from the north-western Pontic region – Holmskoe grave 19 and Hlinaia tumulus 38, grave 2 – in which brooches belonging to the wider Almgren Group VII, Series I horizon were discovered. It argues that both finds belong to the same broad typological field, but do not occupy the same internal position within it: the Hlinaia specimen belongs more clearly to the headknob and external-chord branch, whereas the Holmskoe pair represents the knob-less external-chord variant, close to Almgren 193, and is cautiously integrated here into the later Cociș-Bârcă framework as B1a1b1. Questions of origin and circulation provide the broader interpretative background, while the funerary contexts clarify how these brooches acquired meaning in specific graves. For this reason, the article connects typological analysis with funerary context, comparing the deposition of a single brooch with deposition in pairs and highlighting the principal typological frameworks relevant to the interpretation of these finds. The two graves thus show that the bearers of Sarmatian culture in the region actively participated in the interregional circulation and reinterpretation of ornaments within the post-Marcomannic horizon.

Nicolai Batog

Broșe din seria I a grupului Almgren VII din morminte sarmatice din spațiul nord-vest pontic

Studiul examinează două morminte sarmatice din spațiul nord-vest pontic – Holmskoe, mormântul 19, și Hlinaia, tumulul 38, mormântul 2 – în care au fost descoperite fibule aparținând orizontului larg Almgren grupul VII, seria I. Lucrarea arată că ambele piese se înscriu în același cadru tipologic general, dar nu ocupă aceeași poziție internă: exemplarul de la Hlinaia aparține mai clar ramurii cu buton la cap și coardă exterioară, în timp ce perechea de la Holmskoe reprezintă varianta fără buton, apropiată de Almgren 193, integrată aici cu prudență conform tipologiei Cociș-Bârcă în varianta B1a1b1. Aspectele legate de proveniență și circulație oferă un cadru interpretativ mai amplu, în timp ce contextele funerare clarifică modul în care aceste broșe au căpătat semnificație în anumite morminte. Din acest motiv, articolul corelează analiza tipologică cu contextul funerar, comparând depunerea unei singure broșe cu cea a unor perechi de broșe și evidențiind principalele cadre tipologice relevante pentru interpretarea acestor descoperiri. Cele două complexe arată astfel că purtătorii culturii sarmatice din regiune au participat activ la circulația interregională și reinterpretarea pieselor de podoabă în orizontul post-marcomanic.

*Research carried out within the Program 170101: *Research and valorization of the architectural, ethnographic, archaeological, and artistic cultural heritage of the Republic of Moldova in the context of European integration* (2024-2027).

Introduction

Brooches of Almgren Group VII, Series I occupy an important place in discussions of chronology, mobility, dress, and intercultural contact in the Roman-period Barbaricum [Almgren 1923, 91-93; Kolník 1965, 196, 232]. Since the classic synthesis of O. Almgren and, more decisively, after the classificatory intervention of T. Kolník, such brooches have often been discussed under the influential but analytically problematic label of the “Sarmatian brooch”¹ [Almgren 1923, 91-93;

Kolník 1965, 196, 232]. The term remains useful as a historiographical marker, but it is too broad and too strongly ethnicized to function as an explanation in itself.

A decisive step toward the internal differentiation of this horizon was made by T. Kolník, who separated the upper-chord forms as a distinct “Sarmatian” or “south-eastern” type and subdivided them internally [Kolník 1965, 196-199, 232]. Later, S. Cociș provided a common Roman-Dacian classificatory language for forms with and without headknob [Cociș 2004, 133-135]. The studies of S. Cociș and V. Bârcă then refined the headknob and external-chord branch and placed

1. In this paper, the term “Sarmatian” is used primarily as a contextual and historiographical designation for the funerary milieu under discussion, not as a strict ethnic label.

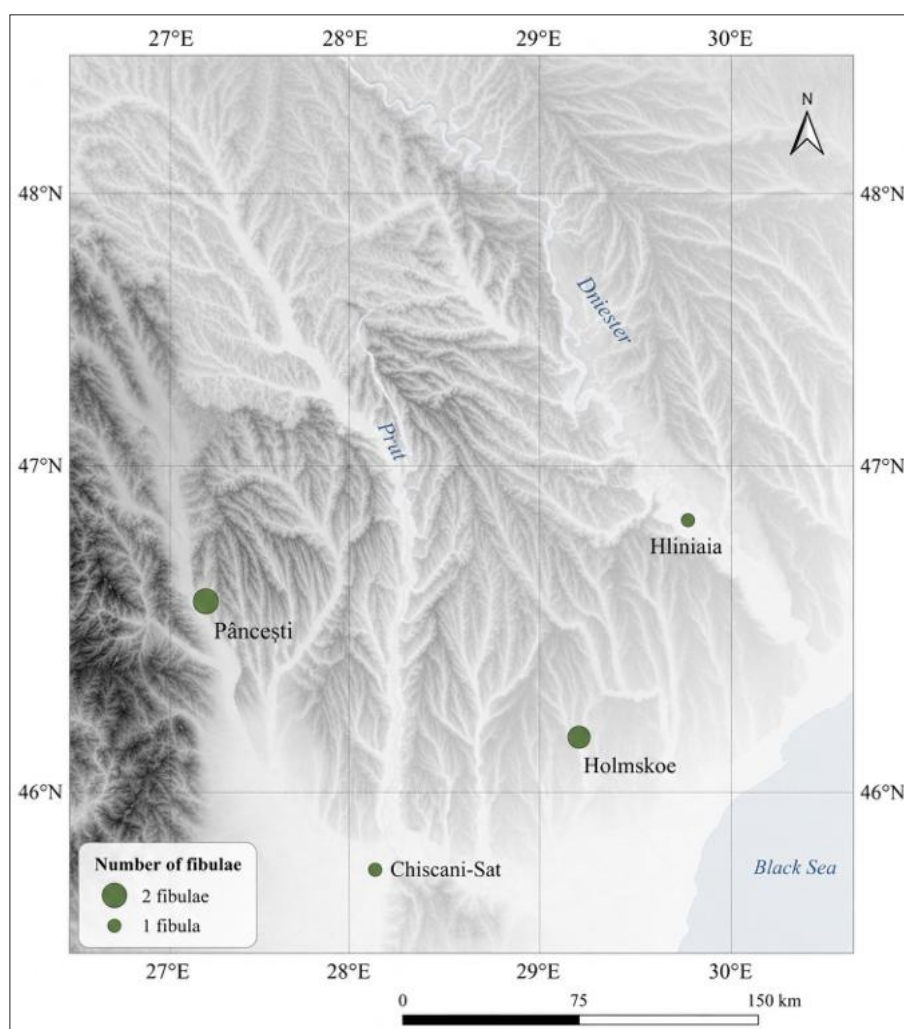


Fig. 1. Distribution map of the fibulae from the Sarmatian milieu north-west of the Pontic Sea.

it within a broader inter-Barbarian framework, especially in relation to the Przeworsk and Wielbark worlds [Cociș, Bârcă 2013; Cociș, Bârcă 2014; Cociș, Bârcă 2020; Bârcă, Cociș 2023].

The present study focuses on two graves from the north-western Pontic region that are of particular importance for the archaeology of the North-Pontic Sarmatian milieu: Holmskoe grave 19 and Hlinaia tumulus 38, grave 2 (fig. 1). It does not aim to rewrite the entire history of these brooches. Rather, it has a more limited purpose: to present the two graves, clarify their typological position within several overlapping classificatory traditions, and examine how brooch forms of external origin were incorporated into Sarmatian funerary practice. Questions of origin, circulation, and workshop traditions are therefore not ignored; they are treated as the broader inter-

pretative background against which the funerary meaning of the finds can be assessed. They do not, however, provide a sufficient explanation on their own. The meaning of the brooches in these two contexts depends equally on their number, placement, association with the body, and relationship to the rest of the grave inventory.

Two Sarmatian graves west of the Prut, Chiscani-Sat and Pâncești tumulus 2, are considered only as comparand, especially for brooch placement within the grave and for the contrast between single and paired deposition [Oța, Sîrbu 2009, 24-31; Căpitanu 1986, 119; Cociș, Bârcă 2020, 143-154]. They are not treated as a separate corpus, but as cases that help clarify whether the Holmskoe and Hlinaia burials represent isolated practices or part of a broader, though not rigidly standardized, funerary pattern.

The article clarifies the typological distinction between the two finds and examines their funerary use after the Marcomannic Wars [Kolník 1965, 232; Cociş 2004, 133-135; Hellström 2018, 91-92; Cociş, Bârcă 2020, 152-154]. More specifically, it addresses three research questions. First, how should the Holmskoe and Hlinaia brooches be positioned within the wider Almgren Group VII, Series I horizon? Second, what does the contrast between single and paired deposition reveal about their funerary use? Third, how do these two graves illuminate cultural transfer and the local re-interpretation of interregional brooch forms in the post-Marcomannic north-western Pontic region?

State of the problem

The historiography of brooches belonging to the wider Almgren Group VII, Series I horizon developed in several stages. Almgren established the broad typological field [Almgren 1923, 91-93]. Working mainly from the Potisza Sarmatian material, M. Párducz was among the first to isolate the upper-chord, high-catchplate cross-bow brooch line within the Sarmatian corpus of the Great Hungarian Plain. His early studies and corpus volumes are especially important for the recognition and description of this line, while the later historical synthesis confirmed its wider chronological and cultural significance, even if none of these works yet offered a refined internal typology [Párducz 1941; Párducz 1944; Párducz 1950; Párducz 1956, 158-160]. M. Smishko, for his part, emphasized the Upper Dniester as an

important eastern concentration zone and possible area of local production [Smishko 1948; Smishko 1952, 79-80]. The decisive classificatory step was then made by T. Kolník, who separated the upper-chord “Sarmatian” or “south-eastern” type from the wider Almgren VII field and linked its spread to the Marcomannic-period contact horizon [Kolník 1965, 196-199, 232].

A. Ambroz provided the main eastern comparative framework through his Group 18 [Ambroz 1966, 72-74]. I. Peškař’s Moravian synthesis remains especially useful because it separates, in practical terms, the line of two-piece high-catchplate brooches with lower chord from that with upper chord [Peškař 1972, 104-107]. S. Cociş’s typology of Roman Dacia supplied a common classificatory language for forms with and without headknob [Cociş 2004, 133-135]. The studies of S. Cociş and V. Bârcă published between 2014 and 2023 then refined the headknob and external-chord branch still further and placed it within a wider inter-Barbarian framework [Cociş, Bârcă 2014, 189-214; Cociş, Bârcă 2020, 137-180; Bârcă, Cociş 2023, 25-48]. Within this sequence, Hellström is especially valuable not because she offers the sharpest internal typology, but because she provides a North-Pontic regional frame and explicitly equates the Holmskoe pair from grave 19 with Almgren 193 under Type III.3b [Hellström 2018, 91-92].

Table 1 summarizes the principal classificatory positions directly relevant to the two graves. It is not intended as a full historiographic catalogue, but as a working tool for the present article.

Author	Region	Holmskoe G19	Hlinaia T38 G2	Dating and remarks
Almgren 1923, 91-93	General north- and central-European framework	Group VII, Series I (Almgren 193)	Group VII, Series I	Foundational scheme; no fine internal distinction at this level.
Kolník 1965, 196-199	Southwest Slovakia / Middle Danube / Tisza region	Variant a: high-catchplate brooch with upper chord fixed by a hook	Variant b: high-catchplate brooch with upper chord resting on the neck of a small headknob	Broadly dated from the second half of the 2nd century into the mid-3rd century; spread linked to the Marcomannic-period contact horizon.
Ambroz 1966, 72-74	Eastern European comparative framework	Group 18, West-Sarmatian series: relatively low, almost straight-cut catchplate, without headknob (approximate correlation only)	Group 18, West-Sarmatian series: very high, obliquely cut catchplate, simple type (A)	Useful as a broad eastern comparison; broadly dated to the 2nd to mid-3rd century AD.

Peškař 1972, 104-107	Moravia and wider central-European comparanda	Two-piece crossbow brooches with high catchplate (Zweigliedrige Armbrustfibeln mit hohem Nadelhalter), mainly Group VII, Series I, close to A201/A202	Two-piece brooches with high catchplate and upper chord (Zweigliedrige Fibeln mit hohem Nadelhalter und oberer Sehne), south-eastern / Sarmatian line	General horizon late 2nd to early / first half of the 3rd century.
Cociș 2004, 133-135	Roman Dacia	Type 32a2b (without headknob)	Type 32a2a2 (with headknob)	In Roman Dacia these brooches occur in post-Marcomannic levels and remain in use into the first half of the 3rd century AD.
Petković 2010, 92-104	Serbia / Viminacium	-	Type 14/D: strongly profiled, two-piece, high-catchplate brooch with external chord	Securely dated in a grave context to the 2nd century AD; valuable as a south-eastern Daco-Sarmatian parallel.
Cociș, Bărcă 2014, 189-214; Cociș, Bărcă 2020, 137-180; Bărcă, Cociș 2023, 25-48	Dacia and the Barbarian environments of the Tisza basin and east and south-east Romania	B1a1b1 = outer chord + fastening support, simple spring, bronze, decorated, size variant 1 (reconstructed by analogy from the authors' typological system)	B2a1a2 = headknob + external chord	Key modern typology.
Hellström 2018, 91-92	North-Pontic Sarmatian milieu	Type III.3b (Almgren 193)	Type III.3b	Broad regional frame that does not differentiate in detail between headknob and knobless examples within this regional scheme.

Table 1. Main classificatory positions for the Holmskoe and Hlinaia brooches.

A broader eastern perspective adds a third point. M. Smishko remains important not for fine typological attribution, but because he recognized early the Upper Dniester as a key eastern concentration zone and suggested the possibility of local production there [Smishko 1952, 79-80]. Later scholarship developed this line of observation further. M. Liubichev and V. Didyk identified a second concentration zone in the Dnieper-Donets forest-steppe, emphasized the intermediary finds linking it with the Upper Dniester, and placed the relevant Kiev and Chernyakhov contexts broadly in the range of AD 250-270/290 [Liubichev, Didyk 2001-2002, 335, 342]. In a later Chernyakhov-ori-

ented synthesis, E. Gorokhovskii and O. Gopkalo correlated the A. Ambroz and Gorokhovskii series more closely, mapped the distribution of these brooches across the Chernyakhov area, and argued for at least two production zones, especially in the Dniester basin and the forest-steppe Dnieper region; they also noted that some series could continue into the early 4th century AD [Gorokhovskii, Gopkalo 2004, 104-106, 122-125]. For the purposes of the present article, these later studies matter not as direct chronological anchors for Holmskoe and Hlinaia, but as evidence that the eastern history of this brooch horizon extended beyond its initial post-Marcomannic phase and

continued within the wider Sântana de Mureş-Chernyakhov milieu.

Methodology and scope

The present article adopts a micro-contextual comparative approach. It does not aim to provide a comprehensive synthesis of all brooches assigned to Almgren Group VII, Series I, nor to construct a new typological system. Instead, it examines two key graves from the north-western Pontic region through three interconnected lenses: morphology, funerary context, and regional historical setting.

This distinction matters because the study moves from graves to typology, not the other way around. Its main concern is how these brooches were incorporated into Sarmatian funerary contexts. For that reason, the number of brooches, their placement on or near the body, and the broader cultural setting are treated as essential alongside formal classification. Typology is therefore used not only to assign the objects to a classificatory position, but also to clarify what kind of objects entered the funerary sphere and how their use in the grave may have differed from their place in broader interregional circulation.

The comparison with Chiscani-Sat and Pânceşti tumulus 2 is deliberately limited. These graves are used to test whether the opposition between single and paired deposition observed at Hlinaia and Holmskoe can be placed in a wider east-Carpathian and north-western Pontic funerary frame. They are not used to build a complete regional typology or to define a separate cultural group. This restricted comparative scope keeps the analysis focused on funerary practice and on the contextual use of the brooches.

Corpus of graves

Holmskoe G19

Holmskoe grave 19 is one of the two North-Pontic Sarmatian funerary contexts examined in this study (fig. 1; 2,1-7). The grave pit was rectangular, oriented NE-SW, and measured approximately 2.5×1×1.55 m. The deceased lay extended on the back with the head to the north-east, the arms along the body, and the legs slightly bent. The inventory included two similar bronze brooches, one placed on the left clavicle and the other between the left hand and the pelvis at the bottom of the pit. Other finds comprised a bronze

snake-head earring from the grave fill, a bronze fan between the right hand and the pelvis, an iron knife near the right elbow, and a conical spindle whorl near the right pelvis. In simple morphological terms, the brooches are two-piece, high-catchplate forms with external chord and without headknob [Gudkova, Fokeev 1984, 17].

Hlinaia T38G2

Hlinaia tumulus 38, grave 2 is the second Sarmatian funerary context examined here (fig. 1; 2,8-10). The grave pit was rectangular with rounded corners, oriented NE-SW, and measured approximately 1.45×0.5×1.3 m. The deceased was identified as a man, slightly contracted on the right side, with strongly bent hands brought close to the face. A dark-brown layer beneath the body was interpreted as decomposed leather clothing. The brooch was found at the left shoulder blade and was the only brooch recorded in the grave. Morphologically, it is a two-piece brooch with headknob, external chord, a sharply curved bow, and a high catchplate [Tel'nov *et al.* 2016, 263; Sinika *et al.* 2016, 131].

Discussion

Same broad series, different internal positions

The two brooch finds can be discussed under the same broad heading of Almgren Group VII, Series I, but they should not be collapsed into the same narrow subtype. When the different classificatory traditions are read together, the two finds occupy distinct positions within the wider Almgren Group VII, Series I horizon. The Holmskoe pair belongs to the external-chord, knobless line and remains closest to the stricter Almgren 193 field, whereas the Hlinaia brooch belongs to the external-chord line with headknob and fits much better into the typological sequence traced from T. Kolník to S. Cociş and Cociş-Bârcă [Kolník 1965, 196-199; Cociş 2004, 133-135; Cociş, Bârcă 2014, 195-196]. In this sense, the present study confirms the placement of Hlinaia within the refined modern typologies, while the Holmskoe pair may be cautiously related to that later classificatory logic as B1a1b1 – outer chord with fastening support, simple spring, bronze, decorated, size variant 1 – proposed cautiously by analogy with the authors' typological system [Cociş, Bârcă 2014, 195-196].

Chronologically, the safest horizon for both brooches remain the period after the Marcoman-

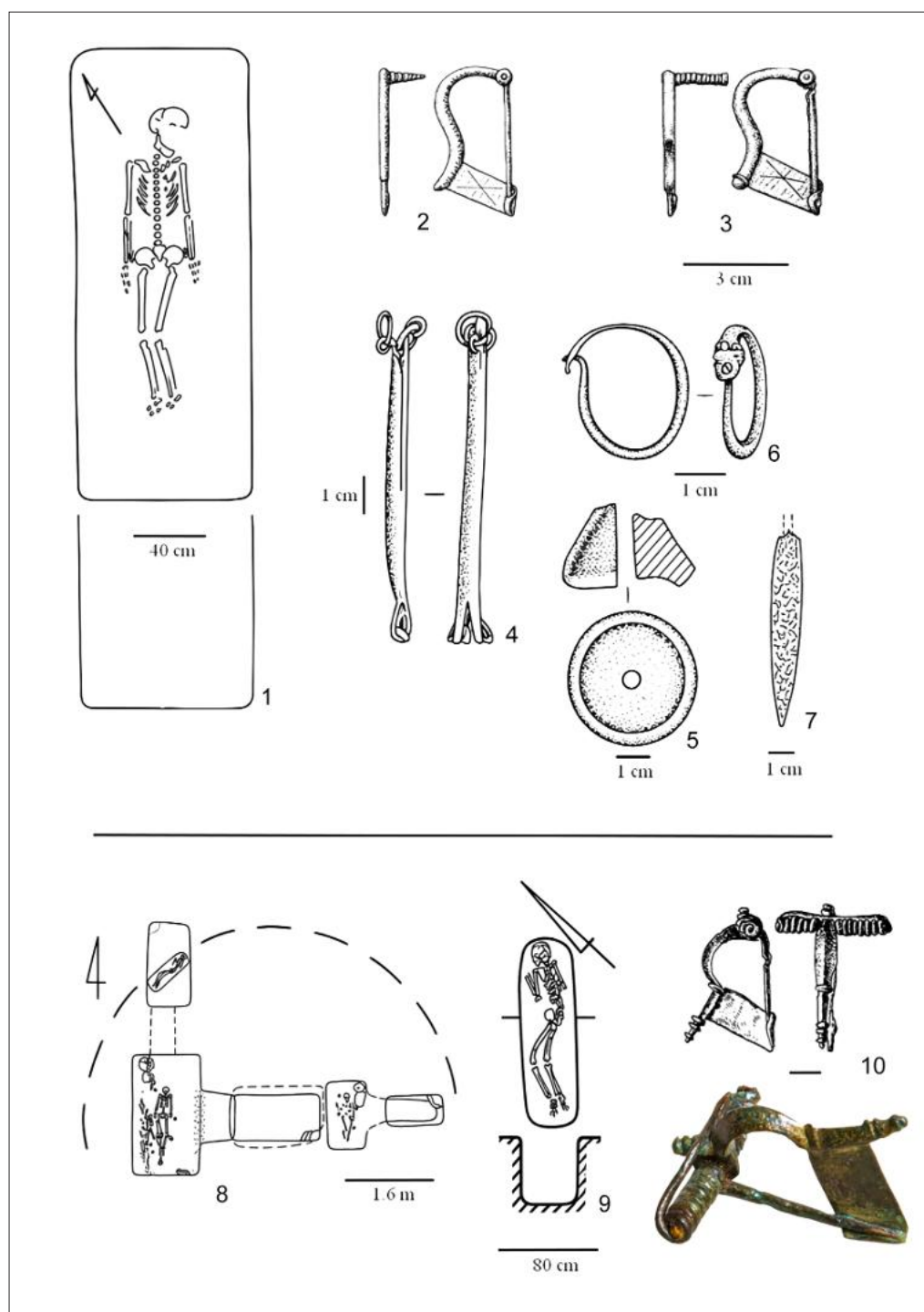


Fig. 2. Holmskoe grave 19 and Hlinaia tumulus 38, grave 2: 1-7 [after Gudkova, Fokeev 1984]; 8-10 [after Tel'nov *et al.* 2016; Sinika *et al.* 2016].

nic Wars, broadly the later second and early third centuries AD [Kolník 1965, 232; Cociş 2004, 133-135; Hellström 2018, 91-92]. This range is also consistent with the south-eastern parallels assembled by S. Petković [Petković 2010, 92-104]. Later

modified or related forms are known farther north and east in Chernyakhov-related milieus, but these should be treated as evidence for the wider developmental horizon of the brooch family, not as direct chronological anchors for the two graves

discussed here [Liubichev, Didyk 2001-2002, 340-342; Gorokhovskii, Gopkalo 2004, 103-130].

The typological distinction between the two finds is not only classificatory. It also matters because the two brooch forms entered different funerary arrangements: a single brooch at Hlinaia and a pair at Holmskoe. The headknob and external-chord branch represented by Hlinaia and the knobless external-chord line represented by Holmskoe therefore do not merely illustrate two formal variants. In these graves, they also provide two different examples of how objects from the same broad interregional horizon could be selected, positioned, and integrated into Sarmatian burial practice.

Funerary use: single brooch and paired display

Having established this typological distinction, the funerary evidence can be addressed through the contrast between single and paired deposition. Hlinaia represents a single-brooch deposition, whereas Holmskoe provides a paired deposition. This contrast gives the typological argument its archaeological relevance.

A broader comparison suggests that this distinction may be meaningful, although the small number of available contexts requires caution. Within the Sarmatian funerary sphere east and south of the Carpathians, paired brooch deposition is also documented at Pâncești tumulus 2 (fig. 1; 3,1-2), where two brooches were found in the clavicular or upper chest zone of an extended

burial with the head to the east, accompanied by a vessel and an iron knife [Căpitanu 1986, 119; Cociș, Bârcă 2020, 143-148]. Single-brooch deposition, by contrast, is represented by Chiscani-Sat (fig. 1; 3,3-8), where one brooch was found in the chest area of an extended burial furnished with pottery, beads, an earring, a spindle weight, and a bronze mirror [Oța, Sirbu 2009, 24-31].

The evidence summarized in Table 2 allows several observations. First, the recorded positions of the brooches should be treated as approximate body zones rather than exact points, since decomposition, sediment pressure, and the movement of clothing or organic materials may have affected their final location in the grave. Despite minor differences in recorded position, the brooches are generally connected with the torso and dress arrangement of the deceased, especially the shoulder, clavicular, and chest zones. The second brooch from Holmskoe, recorded lower between the left hand and the pelvis, is the only partial exception; it may reflect post-depositional movement, although deliberate deposition cannot be excluded. The clearest distinction is therefore not the precise position of each brooch, but the contrast between single and paired deposition.

Second, the distinction between single and paired deposition does not correspond mechanically to sex or gender. Hlinaia is particularly important in this respect, since the single brooch occurs in a grave anthropologically identified as male. By contrast, Chiscani-Sat also repre-

Site/context	Number of brooches	Position of brooch(es)	Body position and orientation	Gender-related evidence
Holmskoe G19	2	One on the left clavicle; one between the left hand and the pelvis	Extended on the back; head to the NE	Spindle whorl and earring may suggest a female-coded assemblage, but this remains uncertain
Hlinaia T38G2	1	Left shoulder blade	Slightly contracted on the right side; head to the NE	Anthropologically identified as male
Chiscani-Sat	1	Chest area	Extended on the back; head to the NNW	Beads, earring, spindle weight, and mirror suggest a female-coded funerary context
Pâncești T2	2	Clavicular or upper chest zone	Extended on the back; head to the E	No secure anthropological determination; paired display may suggest comparison with female costume traditions

Table 2. Comparative funerary deposition of brooches in selected Sarmatian graves.



Fig. 3. Comparative Sarmatian graves west of the Prut: 1-2 [after Cociș, Bârcă 2020]; 3-8 [after Oța, Sirbu 2009].

sents single-brooch deposition, but in an assemblage that is more readily comparable with female-coded funerary inventories. Holmskoe and Pâncești, both with paired brooches, may be compared with modes of dress display often discussed in relation to female costume traditions, yet only Holmskoe offers associated objects that may cautiously support such a reading, while Pâncești lacks secure anthropological determination. The evidence therefore suggests that both single and paired brooch deposition could be incorporated into Sarmatian funerary practice and could occur in contexts with different gender-related indicators.

Body position and orientation add further context to this comparison. The extended supine position documented at Holmskoe, Chiscani-Sat, and Pâncești corresponds well to common Sarmatian funerary practice, while the slightly contracted position at Hlinaia represents a less usual variant. Head orientation toward the northern sector, with minor deviations, also fits the broader range of Sarmatian practice. The eastward orien-

tation at Pâncești is more unusual and may point to local variation, interaction with neighbouring funerary traditions, or a specific community practice. In this respect, orientation and body position refine the comparison, while the main analytical distinction remains the contrast between single and paired brooch deposition.

Recent scholarship has noted that paired brooch deposition is more at home in practices often discussed in Germanic contexts, especially in assemblages usually associated with female costume [Cociș, Bârcă 2020, 169-170; Bârcă, Cociș 2023, 36-37]. The east-Carpathian evidence does not erase that wider background, but it does show that such forms and modes of deposition were selectively adopted and reworked within Sarmatian funerary practice rather than simply copied unchanged. The argument is therefore not that paired brooch display became a standard Sarmatian practice, but that Sarmatian funerary contexts could incorporate and transform practices more widely associated with other cultural environments.

Cultural transfer and active Sarmatian participation

At a broader scale, the two north-western Pontic graves belong to the problem of cultural transfer. They show how objects from a wider interregional horizon were selected, deposited, and recontextualized within Sarmatian funerary practice.

Several routes of transmission and several workshop traditions must nevertheless be taken into account. Recent studies have shown that the best-defined variants of this brooch horizon were connected above all with broader Barbarian networks and with workshops tied to the Przeworsk and Wielbark worlds [Cociș, Bârcă 2014, 206-214]. At least for the headknob and external-chord branch, these brooches have also been related to a broader horizon of contacts and possible movements linking the Upper Dniester region and the territories north of it with the areas east and south of the Carpathians from the end of stage C1a – early stage C1b onward [Cociș, Bârcă 2020, 137-140]. Eastern scholarship, beginning with Smishko, had already emphasized the Upper Dniester as a major transmission zone and even as a possible area of local production [Smishko 1952, 79-80]. The broader picture is further supported by the evidence for manufacture at Bucharest-Străulești, while production at other sites, including by travelling artisans, remains possible [Cociș, Bârcă 2013; Cociș, Bârcă 2014].

When the evidence east of the Carpathians is considered more broadly, the picture becomes clearer still. Brooches of this horizon occur in several archaeological environments rather than in a single isolated milieu. Within the east-Carpathian sedentary milieu often discussed in the literature under the broad Poieniști-Vârteșcoiu/“Carpic” label, important finds come from Poieniști, both from the settlement and from the cremation cemetery, as well as from sites such as Cucorăni and Văleni [Spănu *et al.* 2018; Spănu 2019; Teodor 1975; Ursachi 1970]. Within Militari-Chilia contexts, relevant finds are known from Udeni and Mătăsaru [Bichir 1984, 46-48]. The later Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov milieu belongs to a broader and partly later developmental horizon, but it is still relevant for the longer history of this brooch family. A useful example is provided by Lețcani, where C. Bloșiu recorded a grave with two bronze brooches of different chronological

and typological character: one with turned and wrapped foot, securely datable to the fourth century, and another with a high catchplate, datable to the third century. C. Bloșiu emphasized that this association was rare in Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov cemeteries and, as far as she knew, unique [Bloșiu 1975, 211-212]. The Lețcani find is therefore important as evidence that older brooch forms of this broad family could remain meaningful or be redeployed in later funerary contexts.

In this wider perspective, the Lower Danube and north-west Pontic area appears less as a peripheral zone than as an area in which several cultural trajectories could intersect. For Holmskoe, this broader setting may be reinforced by the fact that, in the vicinity of the Sarmatian cemetery, there is also a necropolis attributed to the Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov milieu [Gudkova, Fokeev 1984]. A comparable situation is known in the Petrești micro-region, where the Sarmatian cemetery published by S. Kurchatov and V. Bubulici is part of a wider archaeological landscape that also includes a funerary horizon of Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov type [Kurchatov, Bubulich 2023]. These cases point to micro-regions in which Sarmatian funerary sites and Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov cemeteries occurred in close spatial proximity, forming cultural landscapes in which different funerary traditions could coexist or overlap.

In this context, Holmskoe and Hlinaia may be placed within a contact horizon linking Sarmatian communities, northern groups, and early Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov components. Recent scholarship has connected the spread of the headknob and external-chord branch with contacts and movements from the Upper Dniester region and the territories north of it from the end of stage C1a – early stage C1b onward [Cociș, Bârcă 2020, 137-140].

Recent studies from Orlovka-Kartal point in the same direction. They draw attention to the increasing appearance in Sarmatian burials of artefacts characteristic of Germanic groups and of populations often discussed in the literature as “Free Dacians” [Bruyako *et al.* 2018]. This evidence shows that Sarmatian funerary environments in the Lower Danube and north-west Pontic region could absorb objects, practices, and symbolic forms associated with neighbouring cultural

groups. Holmskoe, Petrești, and Orlovka-Kartal therefore illustrate, in different ways, the coexistence and partial overlap of Sarmatian traditions with cultural elements that would later become more visible in Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov contexts.

Holmskoe and Hlinaia therefore belong to a period and region in which Sarmatian, Germanic, Dacian, and Roman-provincial traditions increasingly intersected. The Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov question remains relevant as part of this wider contact horizon, while the main interpretative focus remains the deposition of the brooches in specific Sarmatian graves.

Conclusions

The two Sarmatian graves from Holmskoe and Hlinaia confirm the presence of brooches belonging to the wider Almgren Group VII, Series I horizon in the north-western Pontic region, but they also show that this horizon should not be treated as typologically uniform. The brooch from Hlinaia tumulus 38, grave 2 belongs more clearly to the branch with headknob and external chord, while the pair from Holmskoe grave 19 represents the knobless external-chord variant, close to Almgren 193. The integration of the Holmskoe pair into the later Cociș-Bârcă classificatory logic as B1a1b1 is therefore useful, since this framework provides a morphological and typological category that can accommodate the knobless external-chord variant represented by these brooches.

Chronologically, both contexts are best placed within the post-Marcomannic horizon, broadly in the later second and early third centuries AD. Later related developments in the Przeworsk and Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov environments are important for understanding the longer history of this brooch family, but they should not be used as direct chronological an-

chors for the Holmskoe and Hlinaia graves. For the two north-western Pontic contexts, the safest interpretation remains one connected with the circulation and adoption of these brooch forms in the period following the Marcomannic Wars.

The funerary evidence is especially significant. Hlinaia represents a single-brooch deposition, while Holmskoe provides an example of paired deposition. When compared with Chiscani-Sat and Pâncești, these graves show that brooch use in Sarmatian funerary practice was structured, but not rigidly standardized. The recorded positions of the brooches should be understood as approximate body zones rather than exact points, since their final location may have been affected by decomposition, sediment pressure, and the movement of clothing or organic materials. The clearest distinction is therefore the contrast between single and paired deposition, while placement, gender-related evidence, body position, and orientation help refine the interpretation of each context.

Although paired brooch display is often discussed in connection with Germanic costume traditions, the north-western Pontic evidence shows that such objects could be adopted and reinterpreted within Sarmatian funerary contexts. The same evidence places Holmskoe and Hlinaia within a contact horizon in which Sarmatian traditions interacted with cultural elements that would later become more visible in Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov contexts.

Finally, the Holmskoe and Hlinaia graves underline the active role of Sarmatian communities in the circulation, selection, and funerary reinterpretation of Roman-period ornaments. The brooches thus provide valuable evidence for cultural transfer, funerary adaptation, and the interaction of Sarmatian, Germanic, Dacian, and Roman-provincial traditions in the post-Marcomannic period.

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