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**FINDS OF DECORATIVE ELEMENTS OF HORSE HARNESS  
FOR RIDING OF THE ROMAN PERIOD FROM THE VICINITY  
OF RYKHTYCHI VILLAGE NEAR DROHOBYCH**

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the research is to study and introduce into scientific circulation a complex of finds of decorative elements of horse harness from the outskirts of the village of Rykhtychi near Drohobych in the context of cultural and historical processes that took place in the territory of Eastern Prykarpattia and Western Volyn during the Roman period. Their participants were a multi-ethnic barbarian population that came to these lands from the Middle Danube during or after the end of the Marcomannic Wars (last quarter of the 2nd century AD) and disappeared in the phase of migration of the Gothic tribes to the Northern Black Sea region (the 3rd century AD). The methodology of the research is based on various principles of scientific study: historicism, objectivity, systematicity, which determined the application of both general scientific (analytical, statistical, historical retrospective and perspective, synthesis and analysis) and special (comparative typological, stratigraphic, cartographic, material science analysis and etc.) methods. This enabled a versatile and critical approach to the study of the problems of emergence, nature and significance of the complex of finds from the vicinity of Rykhtychi and ensured the reliability*

of the obtained results and conclusions. **The scientific novelty** of the research work consists in the study and introduction into scientific circulation of a set of decorative elements of horse harness for riding from the outskirts of the village of Rykhtychi, unique in the lands of Ukraine, and determining its place among similar complexes in the territory of Central Europe. **The Conclusions.** It was determined that the find of decorative elements of horse harness for riding from the vicinity of Rykhtychi reflects the complex events of the last quarter of the 2d century AD, related to the Marcomannic Wars in the Middle Danube. Based on a number of analogies from the territory of Central and Northern Europe, it was determined that the complex can be a votive offering to the gods for success in solving certain cases, a positive result in achieving the set goal, etc. In barbarian societies, they were made in water environments (rivers, lakes, swamps), on the tops or gentle slopes of hills, in crevices of rocks. The find from the vicinity of Rykhtychi may mark one of the migration routes of a certain group of people from the Middle Danube region through the Carpathians to Western Pobuzhzhia.

**Key words:** Archeology of Ukraine, Roman times, migrations, Marcomannic wars, beliefs, votive offering, spectral analysis.

## ЗНАХІДКИ ДЕКОРАТИВНИХ ЕЛЕМЕНТІВ КІНСЬКОЇ ЗБРУЇ ДЛЯ ВЕРХОВОЇ ЇЗДИ РИМСЬКОГО ЧАСУ З ОКОЛИЦІ С. РИХТИЧІ НА ДРОГОБИЧЧИНІ

**Анотація.** Мета дослідження полягає у вивченні та введенні до наукового обігу комплексу знахідок декоративних елементів кінської збруї з околиць села Рихтичі біля Дрогобича в контексті культурно-історичних процесів, які проходили на території Східного Прикарпаття і Західної Волині в римський період. Їхніми учасниками була різноетнічна варварська людність, яка приходила на ці землі з Середнього Подунав'я в час або після завершення Маркоманських війн (ост. чв. II ст. н. е.) і зникає у фазі міграції готських племен у Північне Причорномор'я (III ст. н. е.). **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на різноманітних принципах наукового дослідження: історизму, об'єктивності, системності, які визначили застосування як загальнонаукових (аналітичного, статистичного, історичної ретроспективи й перспективи, синтезу та аналізу), так і спеціальних (порівняльно-типологічного, стратиграфічного, картографічного, матеріалознавчого аналізу та ін.) методів вивчення. Це дало змогу різнобічно та критично підійти до вивчення проблем виникнення, характеру та значення комплексу знахідок з околиць Рихтич і забезпечило вірогідність отриманих результатів й висновків. **Наукова новизна роботи** полягає у дослідженні та введенні до наукового обігу унікального на землях України набору декоративних елементів кінської збруї для верхової їзди з Рихтич і визначенні його місця серед подібних комплексів на території Центральної Європи. **Висновки.** У результаті досліджень встановлено, що знахідка декоративних елементів кінської збруї для верхової їзди з Рихтич відображає складні події періоду останньої чверті II ст. н. е., пов'язані з Маркоманськими війнами у Середньому Подунав'ї. На основі низки аналогій з території Центральної та Північної Європи визначено, що комплекс може бути вотивним приношенням богам за успіх у вирішенні певних справ, позитивний результат у досягненні поставленої мети тощо. У варварських суспільствах їх робили у водних середовищах (ріки, озера, болота), на вершинах або пологіх схилах пагорбів, щілинах скель. Знахідка з Рихтич може маркувати один зі шляхів міграції певної групи людності з Середньодунайського регіону через Карпати у Західне Побужжя.

**Ключові слова:** Археологія України, римський час, міграції, Маркоманські війни, вірування, вотивне приношення, спектральний аналіз.

**The Problem Statement.** At the end of 2020, Oleksandr Fomin, a resident of Drohobych, discovered several objects made of non-ferrous metals in the forest between the villages of Rykhtychi and Khatky, Drohobych district, Lviv region (Fig. 1). The materials were deposited in the funds of Archaeological Museum of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. Their analysis suggested the hypothesis that the objects belonged to a complex of decorations for horse riding equipment, in particular, were used to decorate the chest saddle strap. The author of the find showed the place of discovery, and also described the conditions of its location

in detail. According to him, the objects lay in one cluster at a depth of 0.4 – 0.5 m from the modern surface in a small hole measuring 0.5x0.5 m. In April of 2021, the archaeological expedition of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (LNU named after I. Franko)<sup>1</sup> examined the find. It was determined that the items were found on a wooded, terraced hilltop 305 m above sea level. Traces of an old filled pit of an amorphous shape were visually observed at this place.

In order to establish the nature of the find, an exploratory trench measuring 8x2 m was laid on the site. The soil stratigraphy proved the complete absence of a cultural layer: under the layer of fallen leaves lay a layer of loam without any interspersions of an anthropogenic nature. At a depth of 0.5 m from the modern surface, it was possible to trace the bottom of the pit, in which, according to O. Fomin, the artifacts were lying. No other finds were found in the trench.

**The Review of Recent Researches and Publications.** The bibliography of the issue is represented by a large amount of publications on Illerup Ådal (Carnap-Bornheim & Illkær, 1996), Nydam Mose (Rau, Blankenfeldt, Lau, Matešić, & Westphal, 2009; Rau, 2010, 2013), Kragehul Mose (Iversen, 2010) in Denmark; Thorsberger Moor in Germany (Raddatz, 1957; Lau, 2009; Carnap-Bornheim, 2014 – 2015), Nidajno (Nowakiewicz & Rzeszotarska-Nowakiewicz, 2012; Kokowski, 1993), Lubanowo (Kontny, Nowakiewicz, Rzeszowska-Nowakiewicz, 2016; Kontny, 2016; Kontny, 2021) in Poland, burial monuments in Witaszewice (Tyszler, 2014), Zohor (Elschek, Rajtar & Varsik, 2011), Cífer (Bazovský, 2017) in Slovakia, the village of Kazanska in the Kuban (Sharov, 2017) and votive offerings in Kamięńczyk in Eastern Poland (Wilbers-Rost, 1994), in Borinka, Slovakia (Bazovský, Majerová, Szábóová & Arendt, 2020), Mödring (Friesinger, Tuzar & Pollak, 2000 – 2001) and Buckligen Welt/Oststeiermark (Guštin, 2019) in Austria related to the study of swamp deposits of ancient Germans. The most recent studies related to the rite of sacrifice of objects of material culture in ancient barbarian societies are published in the works by R. Blankenfeldt and C. von Carnap-Bornheim (Blankenfeldt & Carnap-Bornheim, 2018), N. Lau (Lau, 2018), A. Rau (Rau, 2016), T. Nowakiewicz (Nowakiewicz, 2015), L. Tyszler (Tyszler, 2019), B. Kontnego (Kontny, 2021), Ya. Onyshchuk (Onyshchuk, 2022b; Onyshchuk, 2022c) and the others. **The purpose of the research** consists in the study of a complex of finds of decorative elements of horse harness from the vicinity of the village of Rykhtychi in the context of cultural and historical processes that took place in the territory of Eastern Prykarpattia and Western Volyn during the Roman era. Their participants were a multi-ethnic barbarian population that appeared in these lands from the Middle Danube during or after the end of the Marcomannic Wars and disappeared during the migration phase of the Gothic tribes to the Northern Black Sea region.

**The Research Results.** The complex of finds from the outskirts of the village of Rykhtychi includes: a disc-shaped three-component ornament – phalera; a whole, as well as a fragment of another, smaller in size, openwork lamellar overlays; a square-shaped armature frame with figured trident projections in the corners; two drop-shaped two-component overlays; a fragment of a square buckle with a fragment of a tongue (Figs. 2–3). The found materials are made of silver, copper and tin bronze (Table 1).

<sup>1</sup> The expedition included employees of the Department of Archeology and Special Branches of Historical Science, the archaeological museum, and students of the History Faculty of I. Franko LNU: Yaroslav Onyshchuk, Yaroslav Pohoralskyi, Denys Sliusar, Vitaly Vdovychenko, Markiyan Koltak.

Table 1

**Results of Elemental Analysis of Finds in the Vicinity of Rykhtychi<sup>2</sup>**

№	Name of the find	Ag (%)	Cu (%)	Sn (%)
1	Phalera (front/back side)	98,3/98,4	1,7-4,1/1,5	0
2	Ring (armature) of phalera	0	99,9	0
	Connecting element of phalera (nail)	97,8/0	2,7/93.3	6.7
3	Openwork overlay (front/back side)	95,5/ 17,1	1,9/4,2	0/78.7
4.	Fragment of an openwork overlay (front/back side)	93,7/43,7	1,8/2,43	0/49,9
5.	Armature frame (front/back side)	2,24/0	13,9/50,9	71,5/36,5
6.	Drop-shaped overlays (face plate/back base)	96,2/0,4	3,8/98,3	0/1,3
7.	Buckle fragment	0	51,6	33,4

The most important element among the named items is a massive disk-shaped phalera. Its total size is 7 cm (Fig. 2: 1; 3: 1). The subject consists of three parts. The basis of the decoration is a round silver plate with a diameter of 6.5 cm and a thickness of 0.08 mm, made by using a press from a thinly rolled silver plate<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 2: 1.1; 3: 1.1). Its surface is divided by concentric circles into 5 fields, of which the inner and outer are unornamented. The other three are decorated with a row of rosette rings 2 mm in diameter with a dot in the middle and two rows of short dashes slanting in different directions. It should be noted that during the application of the sockets, the master probably made inaccuracies in the calculation of the distances between them, which in some cases led to the overlapping of one ring on the other. All ornaments are voluminous, extruded outwards.

The edges of the plate are covered with a massive D-shaped ring 0.7 cm thick, made of thick copper wire and covered with thin silver foil (Fig. 2: 1.2). On the front side, it is decorated with a corrugated ornament in the form of a series of numerous transverse ridges (Fig. 2: 1; 3: 1). To fix the ring on a solid base, three notches were cut along the edge of the plate (Fig. 2: 1.1; 3: 1.1).

In the centre of the decoration there is a connecting element in the form of a copper-tin alloy nail, also wrapped in silver foil. Its convex head is decorated with a cross-shaped ornament in the centre, on the edges – an overlay ring 1 mm thick with oblique recessed lines. The diameter of the part is 1.5 cm, the height is 0.6 cm. The rod is broken and has a thickness of 0.3 cm. (Fig. 2: 1.3). With the help of the latter phalera was additionally attached to some stronger base.

Exact analogies to the described phalera are still unknown, however, from the territories closest to Ukraine, similar finds come from barrow No. 16 of the Sarmatian burial ground in the village of Kazanska in the Kuban (Sharov, 2017, fig. 4,7: 5) (Fig. 4: 5–6). We can assume that the detail played the main role in the decoration of the chest saddle belt, decorating its central part.

The openwork plate cover has a rectangular shape and is made of very thin silver foil with

<sup>2</sup> X-ray spectral analysis of the metal was performed by Roman Serkis in the laboratory of the Department of Physics of Solid State, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv using a REMMA-102-02 scanning electron microscope.

<sup>3</sup> The composition of the chemical elements of silver parts contains a proportion of copper in the range of 1.7–4.1%, which may be an impurity of natural origin (Biletskyi, Omelchenko & Horvanko, 2016, p. 337).

a thickness of 0.06 mm. Its total size is 6.7x4.2 cm. The decoration is divided into 3 parts: the middle one has a shape close to a square and measures 4x3.4 cm, the two side ones are rectangular, measuring 4.2x2 cm. The central part of the find is made in the shape of a four-petaled flower with longitudinally separated petals. The side fields are decorated with rows of carved semi-ovals and rhombuses (Fig. 2: 2; 3: 2). The front surface of the pad is smooth, the back one – with the remains of tin, with which it was soldered to the rigid base (Fig. 1).

Similar materials are known among finds from cluster No. 190/142 (SARK) in swamp deposit in Illerup Ådal, Denmark (Carnap-Bornheim & Illkær, 1996, Bd. 7, Taf. 231) (Fig. 4: 11–12), a rich burial No. 22 in Witaszewice, Central Poland (Tyszler, 2019, s. 42, ryc. 5: 2), partly similar – from the burial ground in the village of Kazanska (barrow No. 16) in the Kuban (Sharov, 2017, p. 358, fig. 3) (Fig. 4: 9–10). Fields with semi-oval and rhombic cut-outs are similar to part of an openwork plate from object 15/2008 of an elite German burial ground in Zohor, Slovakia, which dates back to the end of the 2d – the beginning of the 3rd century AD (Elschek, Rajtar & Varsik, 2011, ss. 141–142, obr. 11: 2).

In the complex of finds from Rykhtychi there is a fragment of another similar overlay made of silver foil. Only a fragment of a 4 cm long frame with the remains of flower petals in two corners remained from it (Fig. 2: 3; 3: 3). Analogies to this type of decorative elements are known in horse harness complexes from Mödring in Austria (Friesinger, Tuzar & Pollak, 2000 – 2001, s. 265, Abb. 11) (Fig. 4:1) and Borinka in Slovakia (Bazovský, Majerová, Szábóová & Arendt, 2020, ss. 253, 256, Abb. 4: 1–2) (Fig. 4: 2–3), where they decorated the latches of the belt turrets at the ends of the chain reins of the Vimose type.

One side of the square frame is damaged. It is made of an alloy of copper and tin. There are four protrusions in the form of tridents in the corners (Fig. 2: 4; 3: 4). The size of the find is 4x3.4 cm, the width of the sides is 0.6–0.7 cm, and the thickness is 0.2 cm. There are four through holes with a diameter of 2 mm on the surface, with the help of which it was attached to the leather base. It is obvious that such objects were used as fittings for fixing the above-described openwork overlays with the image of four-petaled flowers. This, in particular, is indicated by both the identical dimensions and the remains of tin solder on one of the sides of the frame. A fragment of a similar armature comes from a complex of finds of horse harness from Borinka in Slovakia (Bazovský, Majerová, Szábóová & Arendt, 2020, ss. 254–255, Abb. 4: 5) (Fig. 4: 4).

The two teardrop-shaped ornaments consist of two parts: a partially preserved copper plate, which played the role of an armature, and an overlay made of silver foil (Fig. 2:5–6; 3:5–6). The latter are attached using tin solder. The size of the findings is: preserved copper plates measuring 3.4x1.8 cm, silver elements – 4x2.2 cm. The first ones have two round holes with a diameter of 3 mm, with the help of which the part was connected to the base. Similar finds are known as from the Germanic sacred Lake Illerup Ådal (Carnap-Bornheim & Illkær, 1996, Taf. 233:ABE–ABLF) (Fig. 4: 13–14), as well as the burial ground in the village of Kazanska (Sharov, 2017, fig. 4,7:5) (Fig. 4: 7–8).

The fragment of the bronze buckle is not very informative for the reconstruction of its appearance. It is frame-type, elongated-rectangular in shape and made by casting method from an alloy of copper and tin. One of the long sides of the case in the central part has a thinning for fixing the tongue (Fig. 2: 7; 3: 7). Since the size of the largest fragment is 3.0x1.9 cm (the thickness of the frame is 0.3–0.4 cm), the approximate dimensions of the buckle could be 5x2 cm. Like the objects described above, the find could also be part of a complex of horse harnesses, used to connect leather bridle straps.

As mentioned above, the studies carried out by expedition of scholars of Ivan Franko

Lviv National University did not reveal any traces of a cultural layer or signs of a burial monument at the site of the find. Although all the items lay in one cluster in a small pit, their small number casts doubt on the hoard origin of the objects. On the other hand, in the complex the presence of only a part of the decorative elements of horse harness, as well as the intentional damage of the majority of them, may indicate the cult character of the object. We assume that they could have been buried with a sacrificial purpose to propitiate the gods. Similar material votives are known not only in the north of Europe, where they are represented in the sacred bog complexes of Illerup Ådal, Thorsberg Moor, Nydam Mose and the others, but also in its central regions. In particular, donations in the form of separate items of horse riding harness were found in the localities in Kamieńczyk in Eastern Poland (Wilbers-Rost, 1994, s. 189), Borinka in South-Western Slovakia (Bazovský, Majerová, Szábóová & Arendt, 2020), Mödring (Friesinger, Tuzar & Pollak, 2000 – 2001), Buckligen Welt/Eastern Styria (Guštin 2019, s. 488, Abb. 1) in Lower Austria, etc. For example, an almost completely preserved bridle with chain reins of the Vimose type from Kamieńczyk, Masovian Voivodeship, was found in the Zahidny Buh River, and according to Bartosz Kontny could get there as a result of ritual actions (Kontny, 2019, ss. 87–88). Artifacts from Borinka, Malatsky District, were discovered in a mountainous area on the gentle slope of a high hill. The complex included a bridle with the Vimose reins and separate parts of a horse riding harness with elements of a decorative set (Bazovský, Majerová, Szábóová & Arendt, 2020). The authors of the article believe that they were buried for ritual purposes on an ancient road and may be synchronous with the Roman station of the period of the Marcomannic Wars in the town of Stupava (Bazovský, Majerová, Szábóová & Arendt, 2020, s. 262). Well-preserved horse bridles in the Müdring and Bukligen Welt/Eastern Styria were hidden in rock crevices for the same purpose (Guštin, 2019, ss. 489, 492).

Thus, found in the vicinity of the village of Rykhtychi materials represent the incoming cultural group, conditionally named Karivska (Onyshchuk, 2022b, p. 69). Its eponymous landmark is Kariv-I burial ground in Western Pobuzhzhia. As a result of excavations, 12 cremation burials with the remains of 13 people were discovered there: 7 men, 5 women and 1 child (an adolescent group *infantilis II*) (Onyshchuk, 2022b, p. 67). The found items of burial equipment (bronze and glass vessels, Terra sigillata ceramics, fragments of the Roman amphorae, gold jewelry, etc.) testify to the elitist nature of the find. In Burial No. 2 the use as an urn of a bronze cauldron with attachments in the form of male chests with hairstyles of the “*nodus suebicus*” type (“Suebian knot”) testifies not only to a high social status of the person buried in it, but also an ethnic affiliation to the Germanic tribes of the Suebian origin. The most famous of them (Marcomani, Quads, Boers) lived in the Pannonian Limes at that time (Onyshchuk, 2019, ss. 368–369, 372). At the same time, the burial rites of Kariv cemetery show signs of the multiculturalism of population there. They are traced in various ways of arranging graves, ritual actions related to the process of placing the remains, as well as in the composition and nature of the accompanying inventory (Onyshchuk, 2022a, pp. 151–152; 2022b, pp. 79–81).

A new group of people appears in the western regions of Ukraine in the last quarter of the 2d century AD during or after the end of the Marcomannic Wars (Onyshchuk, 2022b, pp. 79–81). In addition to Kariv and Rykhtychi in the region of Eastern Prykarpattia and South-Western Volyn, it is represented by burials and accidental material finds in a number of other settlements (Toboliv, Zhovkva, Rechychany, Stinka (?), Slovita, etc.) (Onyshchuk 2022c, ss. 84–89, fig. 1). The eastern border of its distribution is fixed within Zhytomyr region according to the finds

that, unfortunately, were obtained as a result of illegal activities of “black diggers”. According to published information, at least three objects are known on this territory, which we can theoretically associate with Kariv group. This is a random find of a part of the Vimose type chain with a plate lock of the crank belt, decorated with a four-petal flower similar to Rykhtychi finds (Schuster, in print, Abb. 23) (Fig. 5: 1) and items from two cremation military graves with weapons destroyed by detectorists (Fig. 5: 2–3). Among the burial goods of the latter there are large square buckles with a double tongue along with wide ends of belts with openwork geometric ornamentation of the opus interrasile type in one case (Schuster, in print, Abb. 47: 3a–3b) and with linear and spiral cutouts in the second (Levada, 2020).

The openwork ornamentation of the metal elements of the belts has analogies on the Germanic monuments of the early Roman period of the Middle Danube region, in the Western Baltic Bogachev and Dollkaim-Kovrovo cultures, as well as in Northern European marsh deposits, where, however, they date to the C1b phase (the second half of the 3d century AD). In Przeworsk culture, this type of decoration occurs much less often. However, if among the Western Balts this ornament mostly has the form of triangles, then in Przeworsk culture it is supplemented with rows of rhombuses, semi-ovals and a quatrefoil motif (Madyda Legutko, 2009, p. 778). The origins of the openwork technique are associated with the provincial Roman world, in particular with the spread of Norico-Pannonian women's belts richly decorated in the style of opus interrasile in the Dollkai-carpet culture. During the B2/C1a period (the second half of the 2nd century AD), such an ornament appears on the elements of a man's belt (Madyda Legutko, 2009, p. 780).

According to typology of Renata Madyda-Legutko wide lamellar ends with edges concave to the middle belong to Type 9, Variety 5, Group IV (Type JIV.1 according to Klaus Raddatz) (Raddatz, 1957, ss. 101–103). They functioned during a long period of time from the last quarter of the 1st (phase B2) to the beginning of the 3rd century AD (phase C1a). We assume that such products could have entered the territory of Ukraine in the last quarter of the 1st century AD together with carriers of Kariv group. It is also possible that they may mark the direction of movement of this people together with the Goths to the Northern Black Sea region at the final stage of their existence.

**The Conclusions.** Thus, elements of horse harness from the vicinity of Rykhtychi were buried for sacrificial purposes by migrants from the territory of the Middle Danube. This may be a reflection of the custom of sacrifices to the gods, which in the territory of Central and Northern Europe were made in water environments, crevices of rocks, on the tops or gentle slopes of hills. Also, the complex of finds from the vicinity of Rykhtychi may mark one of the migration routes of a group of barbarian people from the Middle Danube region through the Carpathians to Western Pobuzhzia, where they left the eponymous of Kariv-I.

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### Illustrations

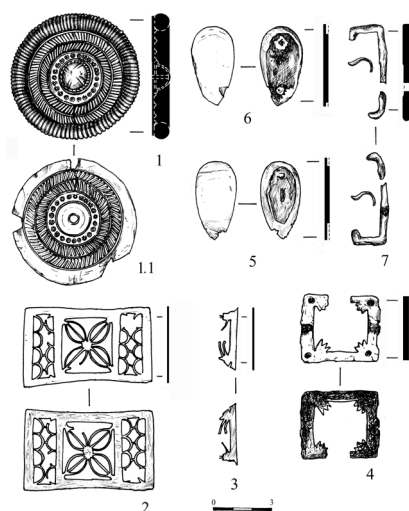


Fig. 1. Map of the place where decorative elements of horse harness were found (topobase from the Internet resource <https://mistaua.com>)



Fig. 2. Finds from the outskirts of the village of Rykhtychi (photo by Ya. Onyshchuk)

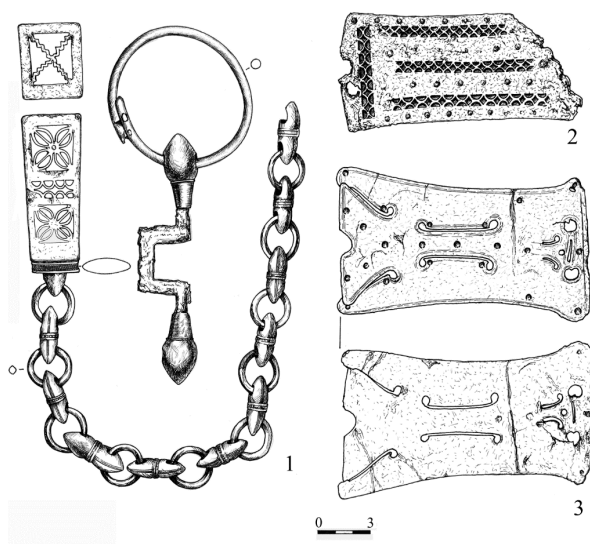




**Fig. 3. Finds from the outskirts of the village of Rykhtychi (drawing by H. Bashta)**



**Fig. 4. Analogies to the finds from the outskirts of the village of Rykhtychi:**  
 1 – metal elements of a horse bridle with reins of the Vimose type from Müdring (Friesinger, Tuzar & Pollak, 2000 – 2001. Taf. 5); 2–4 – turret fasteners and a fragment of the frame-armature from Vimose type chain reins from Borinka (Bazovský, Majerová, Száboová & Arendt, 2020, Abb. 4); 5–10 – finds from burial No. 16 of the cemetery in Kazanska village (Sharov, 2017, fig. 3–4); 11–14 – materials from accumulation No. 190/142 (SARK) of Illerup Ådal marsh deposit (Carnap-Bornheim & Illkær, 1996, Taf. 231,233)



**Fig. 5. Finds in Zhytomyr Region:**

- 1 – details of a horse bridle with reins of the Vimose type (Schuster, in print, Abb. 23),  
2–3 – belt ends with an openwork ornament  
(2 – Schuster, in print, Abb. 4:3a; 3 – Levada, 2020) (Fig. H. Bashta)

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