

Recently identified epigraphic and peri-epigraphic relics from the Avar cemetery of Zamárdi

Bence Fehér

Institute of Hungarian Research, H-1014 Budapest, Hungary

ABSTRACT

There are several metallic pieces among the finds of the Avar cemetery of Zamárdi that bear different scratches. The author discusses the items where the scratches are potentially runiform inscriptions or other peri-epigraphic signs (tamgas, numerals, etc.). The surfaces of six strap ends are undoubtedly inscribed, but the deciphering of those letters is unreliable; the characters mostly seem to fit well with the Nagyszentmiklós alphabet, apart from the fragment of the strap end from grave 1392, the two fragmentary letters of which are different from the known Avar-period writing systems. The first item (from grave 1807) shows a two-word sentence, its structure is typical for the Nagyszentmiklós-type inscriptions. Besides, a silver fitting contains a mark which can either be a Nagyszentmiklós-type letter or a numeral, and a fragmentary pressed leaden sheet proved to be part of a Byzantine leaden bulla.

Nine other objects bear possibly intentional signs which are not inscriptions: tamgas, crosses or other non-verbal marks. Six objects are decorated with clearly ornamental scratches.

KEYWORDS: Avars, runiform inscription, strap end, Nagyszentmiklós alphabet, scratches

Since the publication on the Avar cemetery of Zamárdi,¹ we know there are several metallic pieces among the finds that bear different scratches and incisions, potential runiform

1 Bárdos–Garam 2009, Bárdos–Garam 2014, for its evaluation see Garam 2018.

inscriptions. É. Garam enumerates 28 objects,² but it is evident that not all are inscribed; some scratches bear witness to decorative activities and some others are probably only natural lesions. Only one proper inscription was published by J. Harmatta,³ but he seriously misinterpreted it, taking it to be one Sogdian and two runiform inscriptions – the written part is only a shorter sequence in Greek letters, all other elements are drawings.⁴ When I was preparing the corpus of the runiform inscriptions of the Carpathian basin, I had the opportunity to examine it and the other objects which seemed to contain real writing in the Rippl-Rónai Museum of Kaposvár, and published them in the corpus⁵ (incidentally, only two items were written in a strict sense). Still, many objects remained which are reported in the inventory as scratched. Due to the kind permission and help of Péter Németh, I was able to investigate them in 2020. As assumed beforehand, I found a number of inscribed items, but the majority contained only other kinds of scratches. In this article I will describe the epigraphic and the peri-epigraphic relics, i.e. the scratches that were probably intentional, meaningful signs; but as an appendix, the objects reported as possible inscriptions, but which turned out not to be, will be enumerated too.⁶

A deciphering attempt must wait for another more detailed article because the real inscriptions seem to be written with letters closely related to the Nagyszentmiklós alphabet, and the latter has not been solved without doubt to date. Still, I have included the letter sequences for the sake of subsequent interpretation, using the numerical code I applied in the KMRE.⁷

Objects with certain or probable inscriptions

1. Zamárdi, grave 1807. Fragment from the top part of a pressed bronze large strap end, inv. no. 247.1.1807.5.⁸ (2.3) x 2.5 x 0.5 cm. It was fastened with one rivet. On the back plate there are distinct characters in a transversal line, and the surface is covered with a strong patina with a lot of subsequent transversal and (at least two) circular scratches, which must

2 Garam 2018, 321, in details 323–326 (she calls 7 items ‘kerbschriftzeichenverdächtige’, *ibid.* 325).

3 Harmatta 1995, Harmatta 1996.

4 Fehér 2021 No. 1; KMRE No. 063 (inscription: **a** → πππ (?) ωφ, **b** 55).

5 KMRE Nos. 063, 067¹ (inscription: **a** γ2;34^34 **b** ← `60' 01 ^{01 01} 01 `60'), 107¹, 107²; Fehér 2021, Nos. 1–4.

6 A few items remain which I could not find, from those that Garam 2018, 321 reported as scratched: the objects from the graves 1367 (= 1376?), 2346. In a later investigation, they may perhaps prove to be written.

7 KMRE p. 19–23.

8 Published: Bárdos–Garam 2014, 54; Taf. 192, 1807,2 (drawing of the unwritten face; the publishers do not mention the inscription).

be lesions (they are much more superficial). The letters themselves are written negligently, sometimes with two strokes which seem to have been corrections. Consequently, they are barely legible. Evidently they run from right to left; they can be rendered most probably with the following series of characters:

← + 35 (?) 22 (or 13) : 01 41 (or 01 13') 60

The 35 (?) character is very doubtful; at the same time, it is the only one that does not fit any known writing system of the Avar period (although 35 is present in the KMRE 069 inscription, and being part of the later Szekler runiform script, it is not impossible that it was part of the Jánoshida alphabet too). All the other signs fit well into the Nagyszentmiklós alphabet.⁹ This may be applied to other objects that certainly contain writing too, No. 2 and No. 3, and therefore it is probable that the Zamárdi community mostly used the Nagyszentmiklós runiform alphabet; still, No. 4 and No. 5 barely fit in with this tradition, and it makes it credible that there were other, rarer writing methods in use in Zamárdi too. In the middle of the inscription, there is a division mark, which speaks for two short words; thus No. 1 and No. 2 contain 3-letter-long words (or maybe 4 letters once), this is also typical of the Nagyszentmiklós-type inscriptions.

2. Zamárdi, grave 1973 (?). Bronze large strap end, inv. no. 94.07.27.¹⁰ 8.6 x 2.4 x 0.4 cm. Box folded from sheet bronze, nailed together on the top with three rivets in a triangular shape. The front face adorned with braided ribbons. The back face was originally plain, but afterwards it was partially scratched with several different patterns: **a**) on the upper half beneath the rivets, a rectangular pattern with a diagonal double-lined cross, some kind of 'casket' pattern; **b**) transversal scratches through the left side of the 'casket', a little similar to the design of No. 10, maybe denoting the same thing (numbering?); **c**) a double-lined curving pattern beneath the 'casket', its meaning is presently not obvious, but maybe Garam was right, whose drawing shows something like an attacking game;¹¹ **d**) a transversal line of three characters (character height 0.4 cm) between very slight parallelous guide lines, which seem to be numbers or perhaps letters; they show the forms ← 51 41 (?) ,33' or (upside down) ← 33 41 (?) 51 ; **e**) a vertical line of three other characters on the left side near the end, which distinctly seem to be letters (character height 0.6-0.8 cm). If we read them from the edge of the plate, they show the forms (running from right to left)

9 The first character is mutilated (and the pin which scratched it seems to have overrun at least once), but it resembles more 47 than 37, thus possibly the same as the Nagyszentmiklós 47 character.

10 The item was not published in Bárdos–Garam 2014; Garam 2018, Abb. 184 shows the detailed drawing of the scratches, but assigns it to grave 1873; *ibid.* p. 321 mentions an item with a 'false grave number', probably belonging to grave 1833. The records of the RRM speak about grave 1973.

11 Garam 2018, Abb. 184; this pattern occurs in KMRE 063 (grave 1280) too.

← 13 01 41

The original function of the ‘casket’ is uncertain because it was on the normally unseen back face; but maybe it was some kind of tamga similar to the ‘casket’ and ‘tree of life’ on KMRE 107¹². The two sets of characters are doubtlessly meaningful: most probably the vertical ones showed the name of the owner, the transversal ones (which seem later than the pattern c) refer to either some number, or another, later owner.

3. Zamárdi, grave 151. Bronze large strap end, inv. no. 84.51.3.¹³ 8.9 x 2.6 x 0.3–0.5 cm. Undecorated; two long transversal scratches on one side, between them lesser scratches which can be grouped into transversal running characters (1.2–1.7 cm long). It seems that the characters were not made with the same effort and the same instrument: two of them are far deeper and more sharply cut, and partly overlap at least one of the shallower incisions. Consequently, a primary set of incisions was overwritten with another; the secondary ones clearly form two letters in the shape

← 19 13

It must be a short word or a monogram of the owner. The primary signs were maybe the same one twice, a composite mark in the shape 20[^]23.

4. Zamárdi, grave 1405. Cast bronze strap end, fastened with one rivet, inv. no. ?¹⁴ 5.0 x 1.8 x 0.4 cm. On the front plate braided ribbons; on the plain back plate the remnants of some cut-in patterns are visible, but the surface is very corroded, and thus the patterns have mostly perished. About half of the parts of the plate which are not too corroded are certainly plain. It shows that the patterns never provided a continuous decoration, but were different in nature. Above, near the rivet, there was probably a transversal geometric pattern, similar to that of No. 22; below the surface must have been plain on both sides, and a longitudinal pattern ran in the middle; several clearly cut strokes remain, but it cannot presently be stated whether they were characters or a geometric decoration. Further below, there was probably a transversal set of incisions from which only the end remains near the left edge of the plate. I think they were originally between guiding lines such as in No. 2, and were made in different circumstances from the former set, because they seem to have been cut with a different and less sharp instrument. The nature and number of these signs

12 Garam 2018, 326 holds it (as a piece of grave 1833) for a ‘scene’, i.e. a figurative drawing; that may be only partially true, but emphasises its similarity to the strap end of grave 1121, that is, KMRE 107¹.

13 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 32 (referring to ‘Kerbschriftzeichen’), Taf. 17,151,2. Other mentions: Garam 2018, 326 (more cautiously: ‘kerbschriftzeichenverdächtig’), Abb. 88, 186.

14 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 185, Taf. 161,11, Taf. 200,2 (showing only the front plate, not mentioning the scratched signs). Cf. Garam 2018, Abb. 185.

is not clear, but the last and partially the last but one have remained; only the last one can be described exactly. So presently, this transversal line shows this form:

← [- -] 51? (or 23?) y3

We know of two other cast bronze strap ends from the same grave, nearly of the same measures (**a**: 4.5 x 1.75 x 0.35–0.4 cm, **b**: 4.3 x 1.6 x 0.25 cm), inv. no. ?; while the back plate of **a** is full with unintentional transversal scratches (evidently natural abrasion), but otherwise plain, that of **b** is so corroded that we cannot be sure of any original pattern. I think there *was* something in the middle of the surface, maybe a cross-like incision, but it has completely perished.

5. Zamárdi, grave 1392. Fragments of a silver sheet from a strap end, inv. no. ?.¹⁵ Fragment **a**: 2.3 x 0.95 cm, fragment **b**: 1.8 x 0.9 cm. Fragment **a** certainly shows the vestiges of some very slight scratches, but it is so damaged that we cannot draw any inference from it; fragment **b** is hardly in a better condition, but on the right part of the surface there are clear vestiges of at least two intentional scratches which may have been written characters. They are not decipherable, but the first of them is at least similar to a 35' character, unknown in this form from the Avar period, but close to a Runic A, and the second to a 07 character, or a Latin F (this one is a mutilated character anyway). To the left from these two signs, there are two narrower and sharper longitudinal scratches, which were made with another instrument; probably natural lesions, nevertheless they show us that the surface before the two characters was originally left void.

It is probable that this strap end contained a longitudinal written text, but the alphabet and the language is quite unpredictable. Anyway, it was an eminently rich warrior grave, the owner must have belonged to the elite of the early 7th century.¹⁶

6. Zamárdi, grave 349. Front plate of a bronze large strap end, inv. no. 84.184.27.¹⁷ 6.2 x 2.3 cm. Originally unadorned, partly intentional, partly accidental scratches on the front side. In the middle part two long transversal scratches, similarly to No. 3. Between them, the two deep cuts are doubtlessly only lesions, but a shallow scratched character seems to be a meaningful sign situated somewhat awry, a letter or a tamga. If we assume a letter, it is of the shape 35', which is presently unknown from Avar written heritage, but (due to its small size and careless execution) it is presumably the same as the character 20 seen in No. 3, and well known from the Nagyszentmiklós-type runiform alphabet. Near the lower end of the object, two longitudinal parallelous scratches (unintentional, or a number 2?) and on

15 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 182–184, Taf. 160,1392,31, Taf. 204,7 (neither showing nor mentioning the inscription).

16 The grave was dated with a Heraclius/Heraclius Constantinus solidus (616–625), see Bárdos–Garam loc.cit.

17 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 56, Taf. 40 (neither showing nor mentioning the inscription, cf. also n. 16).

the right two very tiny, but clearly scratched signs. They are smaller than the letters known from the most minute Avar inscriptions, and therefore their function must be regarded as unknown, still, they (and their mirrored symmetry) seem to be intentional.

7. Zamárdi, grave 623. Front plate and back plate of a silver fitting, inv. no. 93.115.1–2.¹⁸ 2.85 x 1.8 cm (front), 2.9 x 1.85 cm (back). Fastened with one rivet. In the middle of the back plate a clearly scratched, wedge-like symbol, which (as the fitting was hanging) can be a 60 character (known from the Nagyszentmiklós runiform alphabet; similar to the palimpsest inscription of KMRE 067¹), or (seen from the edge of the fitting) a 34 or ,34 character, probably a numeral symbol (= 5; similar to KMRE 068, 075¹). On the surface of the front plate, a series of shallow and tiny scratches, which resemble letters but are possibly not intentional. I take them all as lesions, apart from the wedge-like incision in the middle position, which is more likely an accidental lesion too, but we cannot rule out that it was the same symbol as on the black plate, repeated on the front plate.

8. Zamárdi, grave 1063. Fragment of a pressed leaden sheet, inv. no. ?¹⁹ (2.3) x (1.7) cm. Originally it was a part of a Byzantine leaden bulla,²⁰ with Greek letters. Vestiges of one line remain with letters 0.9 cm long; only these letters can be deciphered: [- - -]BH+. In all probability, the Avar usage of the bulla (as an import or booty) was not connected to understanding the Greek letters.

Objects with possibly intentional signs but not inscriptions; crosses

9. Zamárdi, grave 1425. Silver sheet, large strap end, inv. no. 96.17.1.²¹ 6.3 x 2.3 cm. On the outer side of the back plate a braided ribbon pattern sharply scratched in, within a rectangular frame. Long incisions overwrite it askew, maybe only subsequent lesions or signs for obliteration. Below the pattern there are two distinct, deeply cut signs which do not seem to belong. They do not correspond to any known written character of the Avar period, and consequently they are not to be taken as letters, but more probably as an ownership mark.

The inner side is for the most part plain, but near the left edge, there is a series of clearly and sharply incised but very tiny signs. This surface was unseen while the strap end was integral and in use, and therefore it was not legible for the owner or anybody else but must

18 Garam 2018, 321, Abb. 185 (not mentioned in Bárdos–Garam 2009).

19 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 137, Taf. 1119, 1063, 2.

20 Bárdos–Garam loc. cit.: ‘Bleifüllung von Riemenzunge’, which seems probable, but the Greek letters show it was only a secondary usage of the leaden sheet, and it can explain its very fragmentary state too.

21 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 188, Taf. 163,1425,3–3a; Garam 2018, 321, 324, Abb. 185 (a very exact drawing), 54.

have been a silversmith's mark. It was arranged in two lines: the one above consists of semi-circles which partly intersect; the one below consists of four almost identical signs (roughly 41 characters) which form a kind of zigzag line. These signs cannot be taken as characters but they were still certainly meaningful, being a non-verbal mark of the production.

10. Zamárdi, grave 517. A parallelepipedic bronze needle case, inv. no. 91.80.167.12.²² 5.4 x 2.05 x 0.4 cm. A box folded from plain sheet bronze, damaged at both ends. Unadorned on both faces; along the right edge (supposing it was the front side) sharp scratches between thick and gentle grooves askew on both sides. The scratches seem intentional, but do not show a clear pattern, mostly they form only long and short alternating strokes. The aim of both the grooves askew and the sharp scratches is uncertain; there are scratches that are slightly similar to letters, but the whole set seems not to be writing, but some other design, maybe numbering.

11. Zamárdi, grave 91. Front plate of a bronze needle case, inv. no. 84.14.2.²³ 6.2 x 1.85 cm. Sheet bronze, with the remnants of a scratched braided ribbon pattern on the front side, similar to that of Nos. 1–2. Although only a little part of the surface shows vestiges of the ornament, it seems probable that the pattern was finished and covered the whole surface. Two parallelous long strokes in the middle were probably parts of the original pattern dividing it into two halves, but on the right, several very short but deeper transversal scratches do not fit the pattern; they must be either unintentional lesions or meaningful signs: numbering or remnants of a few written characters. Still, they cannot be deciphered as actual letters.

12. Zamárdi, grave 444. Front plate of a silver belt mount, inv. no. 91.80.108.1.²⁴ 3.3 x 1.7 x 0.3 cm. Parallelous scratches on the front side, going askew on both sides. Although at first sight they are similar to a fishbone pattern, they must be regarded as accidental lesions because of the lack of symmetry and because some of the left scratches cross the whole surface. Still near the right edge, there is a tiny and relatively shallow \wedge shaped pattern which may be intentional, although its function is unclear.

13. Zamárdi, grave 151. A rectangular belt mount from tinned double bronze sheet, originally nailed together with 4 rivets (two of them are now missing), inv. no. 84.51.2.²⁵ (3.0) x 2.45 x 0.25 cm. Both sides show similar geometrical scratched patterns (originally on the two sides of the belt strap?), the basic motive being a net-like shape (double cross on one side, a testudo-like form on the other), where the squares of the net are mostly filled with crosses. On the 'testudo' side, some of them are more complex forms than crosses, it is possible that they are meaningful.

22 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 76–78, Taf. 67,10.

23 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 24, Taf. 10,92,1. Erroneously ascribed to grave 92, not mentioning the signs. Garam 2018, 321, Abb. 185.

24 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 65 (not mentioning the signs). Garam 2018, 321, Abb. 186.

25 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 32, Taf. 17,151,3. Garam 2018, Abb. 88.

14. Zamárdi, grave 250. Attaching piece of a gilded bronze large strap end, inv. no. 84.114.29.²⁶ (2.4) x 2.3 cm. Various shallow scratches on the front side, most probably unintentional lesions. There are four strokes cut more deeply, which may have been done with some purpose; still, they do not show the shape of a distinct letter.

15. Zamárdi, grave 1355. A large strap end with a damaged silver front plate and a bronze back plate, fastened with one rivet, inv. no. ?²⁷ 7.4 x 2.4 x 0.4 cm. There are a lot of scratches in both plates, mostly accidentally, certainly only natural lesions; on the front plate, several long curving lines near the end can be taken as initial outlines for a (never executed) pattern of braided ribbons.²⁸ There is a composite sign around the middle part, which cannot be either unintentional or part of these supposed outlines; it resembles the sign or tamga of No. 9, unless it is mirrored. Still, its position is very different: not beneath the ornamental pattern, but – if we suppose such a pattern – in its middle, and therefore we cannot know for certain that their function was the same.

16. Zamárdi, grave 349. A cast bronze suspension mount, inv. no. 84.184.19.²⁹ 5.1 x 1.6 x 0.55 cm. The little back plate fastened with two rivets. On the front plate a longitudinal cross, cut into the surface before the rivets were put in. The cross is clearly intentional, but its meaning is doubtful, I do not think we could interpret it in a religious context. In addition, many shallow parallelous scratches askew seem to be unintentional.³⁰

17. Zamárdi, grave 1144. A silver fitting, the pressed front plate contains a geometrical pattern, the back plate is mutilated, not decorated. Inv. no. 247.1.1144.1.³¹ 6.2 x 2.95 x 0.4, back plate (5.5) x 2.85 cm. They were fastened with three rivets. On the back plate a cross was cut in deeply (roughly 2.3 x 1.7 cm), but with unskilled hands. Its function is unclear.

18. Zamárdi, grave 691. A tinned bronze large strap end, the front and back plates of which are separated, inv. no. 247.1.691.1.³² 10.0 x 2.5 cm. It was fixed with three rivets, two of them remain now. On the front plate there are several scratched patterns: the first seems to have been two longitudinal parallelous strokes. Later they were overwritten near the end of the object with a lentiform pattern; over it perhaps a nearly obliterated cross. They must

26 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 43–44, Taf. 31,250,b/6 (not mentioning the signs). Garam 2018, 321, 325 (mentioned as runiform script), Abb. 185.

27 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 176, Taf. 153,1355,1 (not mentioning the scratches). Garam 2018, 321, Abb. 186.

28 According to Garam 2018, 323 a net pattern.

29 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 56, Taf. 40,349,19. Garam 2018, 321, 326, Abb. 186.

30 On the contrary, Garam 2018, 326 takes them as ‘kerbschriftzeichenverdächtig’, but her drawing seems to differ from the reality; there is only one phenomenon near the end rivet of the belt stiffener, which might be some kind of figurative representation (although different from Garam’s drawing), but by no means writing.

31 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 150, Taf. 131,1144,1; Taf. 205,3. Garam 2018, Abb. 41B. KMRE 107².

32 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 96 (‘unverzerte’), Taf. 87,691,9; Taf. 185,6.

be intentional (adorning?) scratches, but evidently no writing; afterwards, a lot of superficial scratches happened accidentally, without any purpose.

Purely ornamental scratches

19. Zamárdi, grave 472. A silver belt mount with five rivets, inv. no. 91.80.132.13.³³ 2.8 x 2.0 cm. The accurately and sharply scratched pattern is only an ornament, a four-petalled rosette, executed before the rivets were fastened. There are some other very slight scratches: partly line guides for the petals, partly certainly accidental lesions. There is only a little cross or 68 character which might be taken as an intentionally made symbol,³⁴ but I think it far more likely to be an accidental lesion too.

20. Zamárdi, grave 517. Silver fitting, inv. no. 91.80.167.15.³⁵ 5.0 x 1.35 x 0.08 cm. One rivet. On the front side there is an ornament of braided ribbons; on the back side, clearly visible scratches, braided ribbons, which extend to half of the fitting, where they cease to be scratched in. The reason why the ornament was abandoned is clear: the artisan began to scratch on the wrong side of the fitting, i.e. the back side, and at a certain point he realised that the ornament would not be seen when used in a normal position. Afterwards, he made the ornament on the front side.³⁶ There are a few lesser transversal scratches over the half-completed ribbons: maybe subsequent unintentional lesions, but more probably a mark for cancelling the ornament.

21. Zamárdi, grave 517. Bronze fitting, inv. no. 91.80.167.29.³⁷ Folded from plain sheet bronze, with one rivet. On the backside, vague vestiges of a scratched ornament, probably braided ribbons; it seems like fragments of a “tree of life”, but it is probably only an ornament. Presently it cannot be said whether it covered the whole surface or was abandoned like in No. 20, being on the wrong surface. Still, the front face remained unadorned.

These two ornaments are not writing or tamgas, only adorning patterns, but they can shed light on the aims and methods of the decorating artisans.

22. Zamárdi, grave 1271.³⁸ A silver fitting with a pressed geometrical pattern on the front plate, inv. no. 247.1.1271.8. 2.45 x 1.5 x 0.3 cm. Fastened with one rivet; on the back

33 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 70–71, Taf. 59,472,8; Taf. 199,1. Garam 2018, 321, Abb. 186, Abb. 54.

34 Two cross-shaped silver sheets were found in the grave too, see Bárdos–Garam loc. cit.

35 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 76–78, Taf. 66,10. Garam 2018, 321, 323, Abb. 184.

36 Yet it is conspicuous that the finished pattern is different from the halfway scratched one; i.e. the artisan must have changed his whole plan (I owe my thanks to Mr Péter Tomka who drew my attention to this fact).

37 Garam 2018, Abb. 184 (not mentioned in the text).

38 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 164–165, Taf. 143,5 or 6 (not mentioning the scratches); Garam 2018, 321 ascribes it to grave 1271.

plate a slightly scratched geometrical pattern around the rivet: a zigzag line and a rectangular frame. Although the pattern does not seem imperfect, the greater part of the surface is unadorned: possibly the dysfunctional back plate decoration was abandoned like in No. 20. In addition, there are only little scratches caused by natural abrasion on both plates; near the rectangular frame to the left there are two deeper and broader, but very short incisions (0.3 cm) with a rectangular cross section, which may be natural lesions too, but possibly also a number 2 cut in after the adorning pattern was finished or abandoned.

23. Zamárdi, grave 674. A bronze fitting, inv. no. ?³⁹ 4.0 x 1.7 x 0.35 cm. Fastened with one rivet; the front plate is intact, the back plate fragmentary, no decoration. On the front plate scratched, decorative patterns (among a lot of accidental scratches): a rhomboid pattern in the middle, over it a cross on the left side, a little circle on the right. Although these scratches are not deep, they are doubtlessly intentional, but there is no reason why we should suppose they were writing or meaningful symbols.

24. Zamárdi, grave 250. Black plate of a bronze belt mount, inv. no. 84.114.31.⁴⁰ (3.0) x 2.1 cm. It was fastened with four rivets, two of which remain. Parallelous scratches on both sides of the plate, semi-circular on the outer side, different groups of linear scratches on the inner side. Probably all these scratches are meaningless.

There are several objects which were reported as scratched in the inventory or previous publications, but they actually do not appear to have been so:

- fragments of a tinned bronze sheet, grave 2051, inv. no. 247.1.2051, without scratches;
- a bronze belt fitting, grave 250, inv. no. 84.181.14. The unadorned bronze sheet contains two parallelous cuts, certainly lesions and no adorning or written pattern;
- a gilded bronze belt fitting, grave 457, inv. no. 91.80.120.2, without scratches;
- a silver mount, grave 472, inv. no. 91.80.132.3, which cannot be definitely identified due to its corroded state, but if it ever contained any scratches, it must have only been a net pattern;
- a bronze fitting, grave 563, inv. no. 93.97.1, which has only got serious lesions on the back plate, no intentional scratches;⁴¹
- front plate of a bronze large strap end, grave 663, inv. no. 93.119.11, with deeper cuts and superficial scratches on the front side, which are but various lesions;
- two gilded silver shoe fittings, grave 854, inv. no. ?⁴² They contain unintentional superficial scratches;

39 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 97, Taf. 86,674,2 (but the drawing seems to refer to another item). Garam 2018, 321, Abb. 186.

40 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 43–44, Taf. 31,250a,36 (not mentioning the scratches). Garam 2018, 321.

41 Garam 2018, 321, 323, Abb. 184 mentions it as an intentional pattern.

42 Garam 2018, 321, 326: ‘kerbschriftzeichenverdächtig’, Abb. 185.

- fittings with pressed patterns, grave 1140, inv. no. 247.1.1140.5.6, they contain unintentional superficial scratches too;⁴³
- a cast silver strap end, grave 1257, inv. no. 94.13.1 was reported to contain a scratched star and a loop, but really it has no scratched mark;
- a gilded bronze strap end, grave 1391, inv. no. 96.16.2 is decorated with a net pattern on the back plate and nothing else; its counterpart, inv. no. 96.16.4 is much the same, but it contains only transversal lesions on the back plate;⁴⁴
- two cast bronze fittings, grave 1918, inv. no. 247.1.1918.18–19, which are densely scratched on the back, but all these are natural lesions;⁴⁵
- back plate of a cast bronze strap end, grave 1623, inv. no. 96.2.1.⁴⁶ It contains a lot of deep and clear, but evidently meaningless and confusing scratches. Although it seems too elaborated for unintentional scratches or lesions, we cannot call it a meaningful or decorative pattern either. Maybe a quite badly conceived imitation of some decoration.
- fragments of a bronze large strap end, grave 1862, inv. no. 247.1.1862.8, they are so corroded, that the existence of a scratched pattern cannot be verified. ■

LITERATURE

- Bárdos–Garam 2009.** Edith Bárdos – Éva Garam: Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Zamárdi-Rétiföldek I. MAA 10, Budapest, 2009.
- Bárdos–Garam 2014.** Edith Bárdos – Éva Garam: Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Zamárdi-Rétiföldek II. MAA 10, Budapest 2014.
- Fehér 2021.** Fehér, Bence: Feliratok és feliratközei jelek a zamárdi avar temetőből. In: Türk, Attila (szerk.): “Hadak útján”. A népvándorlaskor fiatal kutatóinak XXIX. konferenciája. Budapest, 2021. 441–450. [Inscriptions and peri-epigraphic signs from the Avar cemetery of Zamárdi.]
- Garam 2018.** Éva Garam: Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Zamárdi-Rétiföldek III. MAA 10, Budapest, 2018.
- Harmatta 1995.** János Harmatta: Sogdian inscriptions on Avar objects. *ActaOrHung* 48 (1995) 61–65.
- Harmatta 1996.** Harmatta, János: A zamárdi avar nagyszíjvég rovásírásos és szogd feliratai. *Somogyi Múzeumi Közlemények* 12 (1996) 107–112. [The runiform and Sogdian inscriptions of an Avar large strap end from Zamárdi.]

43 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 148–150, Taf. 130,1140/b,5–10.

44 Bárdos–Garam 2009, 182, Taf. 159,8–9. Garam 2018, 323–324, Abb. 185.

45 Bárdos–Garam 2014, 29–30, Taf. 177,4.

46 Garam 2018, 321, Abb. 185. Fehér 2021, No.4 (assumes it to be unintentional lesions).

KMRE. Fehér, Bence: A Kárpát-medencei rovásírásos emlékek gyűjteménye I. Magyarorságot kutató Intézet, Budapest, 2020. [Corpus of the runiform monuments from the Carpathian Basin.]

KIVONAT

Újonnan azonosított feliratos és feliratközeli emlékek a zamárdi avar temetőből

A zamárdi avar temetőben lelt fémtárgyak közt vannak olyan darabok, amelyek különböző karcolásokat tartalmaznak. A szerző azokat a példányokat tárgyalja, amelyeken a karcolások lehetséges, hogy rovásfeliratok vagy más feliratközeli jelek (tamgák, számok stb.) Hat szíjvég felülete kétségtelenül írott, de a betűk kiolvasása bizonytalan, többnyire jól illenek a nagyszentmiklósi ábécébe, kivéve az 1392. sír szíjvégtöredékét. Az ezen látható két töredékes betű nem illik az ismert avar kori írásrendszerekbe. Az első példány (az 1807. sírból) egy kétsoros mondatot tartalmaz, amelynek szerkezete jellemző a nagyszentmiklósi típusú feliratokra. Ezenkívül egy ezüst övdíszben olyan jel van, amely lehet nagyszentmiklósi betű vagy számjel is, és egy töredékes préselt ólomlemez egy bizánci ólobulla töredékének bizonyult.

Kilenc további tárgyon lehetségesen szándékos jelek vannak, de nem feliratok: tamgák, keresztek és más nonverbális jelzések. Hat tárgyra világosan díszítőmotívumok vannak karcolva.

KULCSSZAVAK: avarok, rovásfelirat, szíjvég, nagyszentmiklósi ábécé, karcolások

LIST OF FIGURES

(all photos and drawings were taken by the author)



Grave 1807, inv.nr. 247.1.1807.5.

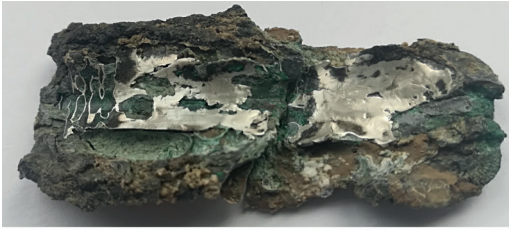
Grave 1973 (?),
inv.nr. 94.07.27.

Grave 151, inv.nr. 84.51.3.

Grave 1405.

Table 1.

1–3. No. 1. Grave 1807, inv. no. 247.1.1807.5.	7–8. No. 3. Grave 151, inv. no. 84.51.3.
4–6. No. 2. Grave 1973 (?), inv. no. 94.07.27.	9–15. No. 4. Grave 1405.



Grave 1392.



Grave 349, inv.nr. 84.184.27.

Grave 623, inv.nr. 93.115.1-2.



Grave 1623.



Grave 674.



Table 2.

1-2. No. 5. Grave 1392.

3-4. No. 6. Grave 349, inv. no. 84.184.27.

5-8. No. 7. Grave 623, inv. no. 93.115.1-2.

9. No. 8. Grave 1623.

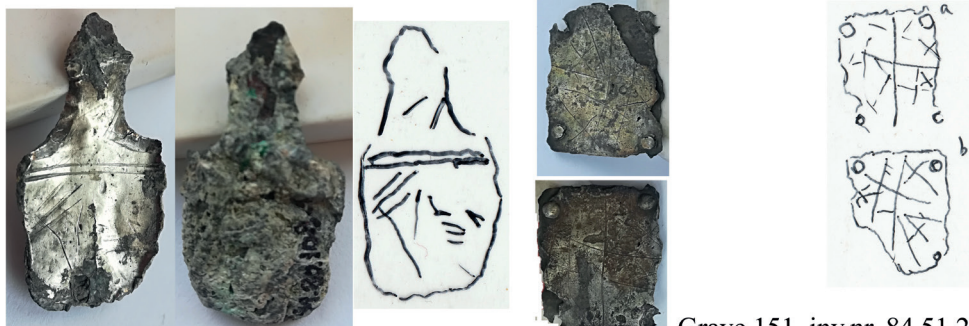
10-12. No. 23. Grave 674.



Grave 1425, inv.nr. 96.17.1.

Grave 517,
inv.nr.
91.80.167.12.

Grave 91,
inv.nr.
84.94.2



Grave 444, inv.nr. 91.80.108.1.

Grave 151, inv.nr. 84.51.2.



Grave 250, inv.nr. 84.114.29.



Grave 1355.

Grave 250, inv.nr. 84.114.31.



Table 3.

1–3. No. 9. Grave 1425, inv. no. 96.17.1.

11–14. No. 13. Grave 151, inv. no. 84.51.2.

4–5. No. 10. Grave 517, inv. no. 91.80.167.12.

15–16. No. 14. Grave 250, inv. no. 84.114.29.

6–7. No. 11. Grave 91, inv. no. 84.14.2.

17. No. 24. Grave 250, inv. no. 84.114.31.

8–10. No. 12. Grave 444, inv. no. 91.80.108.1.

18–20. No. 15. Grave 1355.



Grave 349, inv.nr. 84.184.19.

Grave 1144, inv.nr. 247.1.1144.1.



Grave 691,
inv.nr.
247.1.691.1.

Grave 472,
inv.nr.
91.80.132.13.

Grave 1140, inv.nr. 247.1.1271.8.



Grave 517,
inv.nr.
91.80.167.29.
>>

Grave 517, inv.nr. 91.80.167.15.

Table 4.

1–2. No. 16. Grave 349, inv. no. 84.184.19.

3–5. No. 17. Grave 1144, inv. no.
247.1.1144.1.

6–7. No. 18. Grave 691, inv. no. 247.1.691.1.

8–9. No. 19. Grave 472, inv. no.
91.80.132.13.

10. No. 20. Grave 517, inv. no. 91.80.167.15.

11–13. No. 21. Grave 517, inv. no.
91.80.167.29.

15–17. No. 22. Grave 1140, inv. no.
247.1.1271.8.